

DECEMBER 19, 2005

IN THESE TIMES

WE ARE ALL TORTURERS

CRIME SELLS: WOMEN IN PRISON

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN WRITERS?

KURT VONNEGUT TAKES A GUESS

who is

SHERROD BROWN?

Christopher Hayes reports on the
candidate to watch in 2006.



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“It is preoccupation with possession, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly.”

BERTRAND RUSSELL



Editorial

Their Patents or Your Life By Joel Bleifuss

Have you heard about that bird flu? The threatened pandemic, should it occur, will kill in a worst-case scenario 150 million people,

including 7 million Americans. The resulting mountain of skulls would dwarf those piled up in all the wars of the 20th Century.

Yes, it's scary stuff. People who research the virus say the question is when, not if, the pandemic will occur. And former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson describes the avian flu as "a really huge bomb." The flu kills about 50 percent of the people it infects by attacking the lungs and causing hemorrhage. Healthy young people, those with the strongest immune systems, are most at risk.

To date, only one known drug can ward off death, and that is Tamiflu.

With all of this now widely known, one might expect the Bush administration—having failed to stop the 9/11 hijackers and having just eked through the post-Katrina debacle—to mobilize national resources to ensure that enough Tamiflu was on hand to treat every man, woman and child in the United States.

But it can't. It doesn't own the intellectual property rights to Tamiflu. Those rights are controlled by the Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche Holding AG, which is only able to produce limited quantities of the medicine.

So when the pandemic hits, should you or yours be among the millions who

drown in their own blood, take comfort in the fact that the sacred rights of private property survived.

A hyperbolic rant? Well, if you lived in the poorer regions of the planet and were among the millions of people infected with HIV or living with AIDS, you would be facing a similar situation. The drugs that save the lives of HIV-infected people in wealthy countries weren't available to most of the 3 million people who died this past year of AIDS. In fact, of the estimated 6 million people in the world with AIDS, only 1 million are on an adequate drug regime—and that does not take into account the millions more who don't have AIDS but are HIV-positive.

Poor countries have attempted to find ways around drug patents, though at every step of the way they have met fierce resistance from both the pharmaceutical corporations and the Bush administration. Brazil, which was paying 70 percent of the national AIDS budget to buy antiretroviral medicines from three drug companies, had to threaten to violate patent law in order to negotiate a lower price. And India, where companies were breaking international property rights law and manufacturing generic anti-retroviral drugs, shut down such factories as part of

its agreement to join the WTO.

Similarly, as the world ponders a potential bird flu pandemic, people are beginning to question just how sacred property rights are. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, speaking at the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva said, in reference to Roche, that the U.N. should be "making sure that we do not allow intellectual property to get into the way of access of the poor to medication ... I wouldn't want to hear the kind of debate we got into when it came to the HIV anti-retrovirals." In Washington, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) warned, "Roche is putting their own interests ahead of world health. If they don't begin to actually license the patent for Tamiflu to dramatically increase worldwide production, I am going to pursue a legislative remedy."

The chairman of Cipla, the Bombay company whose production of generic anti-AIDS drugs was stopped when India joined the WTO, told the *New York Times*, "Right or wrong, we're going to commercialize and make oseltamivir [generic Tamiflu]." And in Taiwan, which is not a member of the WTO, the National Health Research Institute has already begun manufacturing a generic Tamiflu.

"It's lives or patents," Institute president Cheng-en Wun told the *New Zealand Herald*. "We value intellectual property, but we have chosen life."

When will we? ■

Letters

Strong Word

I don't know if Gore Vidal is anti-Semitic, but I do know that Israel does not have, as Doug Ireland blithely asserts, an "apartheid government" ("Vidal—Never More Vital," November 21). Unlike the black citizens of the former South Africa, Arab and other minority Israeli citizens, of which there are more than one million, have equal rights under the law. They are not legally required to live in segregated areas, are not legally barred from taking certain jobs, do not have to sit in the back of buses or drink from special drinking fountains. They have full representation in the Knesset. Their right to practice their religions freely is defended, sometimes at great cost, by the

Israeli army and police, a situation that does not pertain in most of the neighboring countries.

That doesn't mean Israeli minorities, Arabs in particular, do not suffer discrimination and are not regarded by many as second class citizens. Unfortunately, they do and are. But that's true of minorities in countries around the world, Muslim minorities in many European countries in particular, and no one accuses them of practicing apartheid. It's too bad Ireland mars an otherwise fine piece with what amounts to leftist cant. I'm surprised the editors let it pass. If that makes me one of Israel's "defenders," oh well.

Terry LaBan
Hyncote, Pa.



DOUG IRELAND RESPONDS

The term "apartheid" is often used to characterize the policies of the successive conservative Likud governments by many Israelis, both in the peace movement and in the Labor Party's left wing, as well as by anti-Likud Israeli intellectuals. It's been employed with increasing frequency since the erection of the Wall of Shame, which inhumanely sharpened the Israeli policy of creating the equivalent of bantustans (a mainstay of the apartheid system in South Africa) for the Palestinians by encircling or dividing in half whole villages and separating Palestinians from the land they cultivate. I refer you to the excellent book The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid, edited by Roane Carey, a senior editor of The Nation. For more on how Palestinians don't have "equal rights before the law," as LaBan claims, read Lisa Hajjar's meticulously-researched book Courting Conflict: The Israeli Military Court System in the West Bank and Gaza.

Not in His Name

As the author of the September 19 article on depleted uranium (DU) weapons, I object to the editors of *In These Times* having run an apology for my claim that the Pentagon had expanded use of DU in the Iraq War beyond the more than 300 tons that had been used in tank and aircraft shells during the first Gulf War

("Letters," October 24). I was not informed of this apology, and I disagree with it.

The editors were responding to a letter from anti-nuclear activist Jack Cohen-Joppa that claimed that there was no "documentary or peer-reviewed forensic evidence" to confirm that DU is being used in bunker-busting bombs. He argues that the charge cannot be verified and says the Pentagon denies DU is used in such bombs. He claims that based upon "known DU weapons systems and Pentagon and other government statements" the "most comprehensive estimate to date" for DU use in Iraq would be 200 tons.

I'm disappointed that *In These Times* would agree with this logic—if it can be called that.

The Pentagon has lied repeatedly about many things, including DU and its risks, and has refused to allow testing of sites where DU is suspected of having been used. After the first Gulf War, the Pentagon called DU a "magic bullet." Vast stockpiles of DU weapons have been produced since then precisely because the military loves it, and it is being used prolifically in the current war.

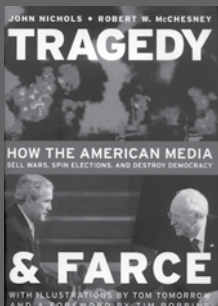
In a May 15, 2003 article, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that it was informed by a "U.S. Central Command spokesman" that in the first month of the war the U.S. Military fired 75 tons of DU solely in the form of relatively small 30 mm rounds used by A-10 aircraft.

On April 17, scarcely a month into the Iraq War, the *Guardian* of Britain reported that "up to 2,000 tons of DU has been used in the Gulf." Other sources, such as the BBC and the *Seattle Post-*

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Intelligencer have offered similar figures. Meanwhile, it is clear that in later U.S. battles, tanks and A-10 aircraft, both of which are known to use DU, were employed, particularly in the leveling of the 300,000-population city of Fallujah.

Perhaps I should have said that "as much as 3,000 tons of DU has reportedly been exploded in Iraq," and should have also added that "the Pentagon denies that it is using DU in bunker-busting bombs." But I do not feel that Cohen-Joppa's letter warranted an apology. I was only reporting what other respected publications like the *Guardian* and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* have stated repeatedly.

Besides, what other story in *In These Times*, or any other journalistic publication for that matter, subjects its facts to "peer-reviewed forensic evidence"?

The answer is: none.

Dave Lindorff
Philadelphia

THE EDITORS RESPOND

We stand by our previous response. Interested readers can continue following the debate by reading Cohen-Joppa's essay "DU Disinfo Dupes Project Censored," available online at <http://serve.com/nukeresister/du-disinfo.pdf> and by visiting Dave Lindorff's Web site, www.thiscantbehappening.net.

Dear Readers,

During the past few months, the *In These Times* staff has been evaluating the changing media environment and how the magazine can best serve the needs of its readers while also reducing its worrisome operating deficit.

With hundreds of blogs and Web sites providing a flow of instant news, the need for the thorough reporting and reflective analysis provided by *In These Times* has never been greater.

We have decided to expand our Web site, www.inthesetimes.com, so that we can publish more breaking news and analysis. And, beginning in January 2006, *In These Times* will officially become a monthly print magazine and expand to 48 pages, with a fresh redesign that emphasizes readability and includes new departments. Our coverage will continue to feature the investigative journalism, labor news and political reporting it always has. And we will also bring you a diversity of perspectives on the issues of the day.

Subscriptions will retain the same expiration dates. The date of the last issue you are scheduled to receive will be printed on the label of your January 2006 issue, which ships in December.

We hope you will like our new, expanded print and electronic formats, and as always, we appreciate feedback about the changes we are making. Please address any comments or questions about the new monthly *In These Times* and its Web site to: Letters to the Editor, *In These Times*, 2040 North Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, IL 60647. For subscription questions, write to: *In These Times*, 315 East Hitt Street, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

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Tracy Van Slyke
Publisher

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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published monthly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 29, No. 25-26) went to press on November 18, for newsstand sales December 2 to December 30, 2005.

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Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions); \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas. For subscription questions, address changes and back issues call (800) 827-0270.

Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through Big Top Newsstand Services, a division of the IPA, at (415) 445-0230, or bigtop@indyexpress.org.

Printed in the United States.



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Help wanted: Kellogg Brown and Root has nearly 60,000 workers in the Gulf.

MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

Road to Riches...or Ruin?

Army recruitment may be down, but economic hardship keeps the troops of Halliburton at high levels. By Andrew Stelzer

TAMPA, FLA.—“WHAT do you think my wife would rather have,” Ivil asks. “A hundred thousand dollars or me?”

It's hard to tell if he's kidding. In the space of 24 hours, Ivil saw four TV news reports about a Kellogg Brown and Root (KBR) job fair being held in Tampa and he thought of his son, who is only two years away from college. This graying African-American family man decided that \$75,000 to \$100,000 a year—with the first \$80,000 tax-free if he lasts the entire year—was too much to pass up. So on August 18 he snuck out of the house and came to the Crowne Plaza Hotel to try and get hired as a truck driver in Iraq or Afghanistan.

KBR, a subsidiary of Dick Cheney's infamous former company Halliburton, is in the third year of a 10-year contract with the U.S. military. According to the *Washington Post*, by May of 2006, KBR will have

received more than \$11 billion for work related to LOGCAP (the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program), which pays for, among other things, chefs, electricians, mechanics, medics, laundry, pest control, construction and water purification workers.

On November 4, U.N. auditors called on the United States to repay Iraq \$208 million that had been paid to KBR from Iraqi oil proceeds for services that the auditors found to be overpriced, lacking proper documentation and awarded non-competitively. While much of that money surely ended up in executive paychecks, it's also helped KBR become an attractive employer with 200,000 job applications on file.

The cardboard display on the table outside the hotel conference room promotes benefits like “integrity,” “adventure” and “pride,” but “the money is the big draw,” says Dale, another of about 60 KBR hopefuls at this afternoon's session, which consists of an hour-and-

Packing in the Partisans

Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, former chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), resigned from the board in November, just before the Office of Inspector General for Public Broadcasting made public a report detailing Tomlinson's quest to cleanse "liberal bias" from public broadcasting.

Tomlinson, a close friend of Karl Rove—who played a role in his appointment—violated the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. According to the report, Tomlinson hired lobbyists to shield the board from structural changes, and installed conservative ombudsmen, partisans and what media reform group Free Press characterizes as "seasoned propagandists," in key positions.

Tomlinson appointed a researcher to monitor the political leanings of guests on "Now with Bill Moyers" without informing the board. Questions also surfaced about whether Tomlinson's promotion and funding for "The Journal Editorial Report" violated federal law, because he blocked senior executives from "balancing programming."

The Inspector General's report says Tomlinson violated CPB procedures that require it "to be free of political interference" and forbid the use of "political tests." Critics charge that Tomlinson's recruitment of former RNC co-chair, Patricia de Stacy Harrison as CPB's new chief executive was a partisan decision.

When his term as chairman ended in September, Tomlinson defended his tenure: "Balance is not rocket science, and that's why I've had so little tolerance sometimes for public broadcast's inability to achieve balance."

In polls commissioned by the CPB in 2003, respondents gave NPR and PBS an 80 percent favorable rating. The results were not released until last July amidst criticism that the data was suppressed.

At press time, Free Press, the Center for Digital Democracy and Common Cause were demanding that CPB officials release all evidence accumulated during the investigation, including e-mail correspondence between Tomlinson and Rove.

—A. Staley Groves

a-half long presentation by Peter Howatt, a recruiter with KBR's special projects group. Six other recruiters out in the hallway sift through resumes while Howatt lays out a far more realistic scenario than the military presents to army recruits. "We don't pull any punches," Howatt told *In These Times*. "People know exactly what they are getting themselves into."

For the most part, the Vietnam veteran stays true to his word. In the first 10 minutes of his talk, Howatt provides his audience with the official KBR contractor death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan (68 at the time). He tells the applicants that they'll be working 12 hours a day, 7 days a week, with 10 days off every 4 months. After a short film showing construction of a tent city in the desert, he advises the room full of military veterans, former Halliburton/KBR employees and average Joes and Jills (complete with a crying baby in the back) that if they are killed in an NBC (nuclear biological or chemical) attack and their remains are contaminated, they won't be flown home to their families. Instead, they will be cremated.

But heads perk up at the mention of salary, and Howatt's sales pitch to the group is tight: "If you owe back taxes, call the IRS, tell them you are gonna go overseas, make a ton of money, and they'll be glad to let you go. Same with child support."

David, a prematurely balding military vet who served in the Balkans, doesn't specify who he owes, but stresses, "I got a lot of bills to pay, and I can only make so much and do so much here."

As of January 1, starting pay in the U.S. army will range from \$15,282 to \$27,464 per year. Although Howatt was reluctant to acknowledge that the military isn't meeting their recruiting goals, he admits that a poor economy "add[s] to our ability to go out and attract the right people."

Hiring private contractors to perform what were formerly military tasks has several advantages. Employees can be terminated at any time, and the government doesn't have to include contractor casualties in the war's death toll (over 400 in Iraq, with injuries numbering about 4,000). Perhaps most importantly, Americans not eligible for military service—like Ivl, who couldn't fight in Vietnam because he was classified 4F—can still become part of the war effort.

Howatt informs the nervous applicants that many of them will be hired by the end

of the afternoon, and others may receive calls in the next few weeks. His goal is to hire 75 to 100 people in the three days he's in Tampa, then move on to the next town and do it all over again. "We currently have between 50,000 and 60,000 people over there now," he says. "We're also getting orders to increase the number of hires that we make. We're still sending 200 to 300 a week. No end in sight."

Another benefit of working for KBR is that supporting the war is optional. Howatt told *In These Times* that even with the growing antiwar sentiment, he's seen no change in application numbers, and in fact, he doesn't care one way or another what KBR employees think, as long as they do their jobs. "Everyone has different feelings about the war," he says. "But your commitment to support the troops over there is to me a separate issue."

Gary, a fresh-faced Latino who was lucky enough to get hired for a food crafts position, says he doesn't really like Bush. "It's not really about him. I'm doing it for my family. Bush still hasn't really given us a good reason why we're in war."

Gary is not alone. Angie, who drove all night from Atlanta to the job fair, is hoping to get hired so she can pay her bills. She also wants to see her husband, who's been working for KBR in Iraq since April. Although she feels the U.S.-led invasion has "done enough damage," she doesn't think that working in Iraq would be tantamount in any way to supporting what she calls "a holy war."

"I believe a good part of this [war] is driven by security of our energy supply," says Dale, a grizzled loner who's worked on offshore rigs in the Caribbean and hopes to do the same in the Persian Gulf. As for the danger posed by the snipers he hears about on the news, he looks on the bright side. "More than likely they're going to be shooting from a great distance so they're gonna probably miss."

He compares Iraq in 2005 to Alaska in the late 1800s. "We don't have gold mines to go to in the Klondike, but this is an opportunity that's very similar to that, and those that have the balls can go after it."

Dale notes another parallel between gold rush prospectors and KBR's truck drivers. "There was a great percentage that didn't make it and died on the road." ■

ANDREW STELZER is a news reporter and anchor at community radio station WMNF in Tampa, Florida.

APPALL-O-METER

5.5 The Perviest Journo Ever

When cultural historians go bad, they really go bad. Consider the case of Peter Braunstein, a NYU-trained historian, authority on disco, and the suspected author of a *really* weird sex crime.

On Halloween, a 34-year-old former editor for the fashion magazine *W* answered her apartment door to find a fireman in an oxygen mask standing amid a smoky hallway. The get-up was a disguise, and this bogus “bravest,” having gained entry to the apartment, chloroformed the woman and duct-taped her naked to a chair.

Over the next 13 hours, the attacker, whom police believe to be Braunstein, molested the victim in the most peculiar ways, with a particular interest in humiliating her. In one strange interlude, he video-taped himself forcing her to try on shoes. (She had recently been fired from her job at *W* for stealing shoes lent to the magazine for fashion shoots.)

Braunstein, 41, a former writer for the *Village Voice* and not-so-successful playwright, had himself been fired from a rag trade mag, *WWD*. He also had a long history of stalking, and had written extensively on the subject for *Details*, the *Voice* and various Web sites. At press time he was still at large.

4.7 The Dodgiest Journo Ever

The case of a suburban Chicago man facing federal charges of laundering money for the terrorist group Hamas offers an evocative coda to the recent Valerie Plame brouhaha.



Muhammad Salah, a used-car dealer in Bridgeview, Ill., and a naturalized U.S. citizen, spent five years in the mid-'90s in an Israeli prison on terrorism charges. During that sojourn, Salah contends, he was subjected to torture. After being

beaten, stuck in a “refrigerator cell,” and threatened with rape, he says, he admitted to certain incriminating things—all of which he now disavows.

The federal case against Salah, as the *Chicago Sun-Times*

reports, is being prosecuted by the office of U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald and may seriously benefit from the testimony of an American reporter who was present—God knows why—at Salah’s interrogation in Israel. That journalist told the *Sun-Times* in 1998 that Salah was not under duress during questioning. That journalist’s name? Judith Miller.

3.0 Fit to Fight

Not that it’s anything to be concerned about, but the U.S. armed forces are now calling up the seriously ill for service in Iraq. In November, the Government Accountability Office issued a report tasking the Pentagon for having no standards for determining which health conditions may make members of the reserve forces unfit for active duty. The report noted that soldiers who had recently suffered heart attacks were called up, as were those who were suffering from acute asthma, hernias and bipolar disorder. One man was called up two weeks after kidney surgery, as was a woman four months into chemotherapy for breast cancer.

Give ‘em hell, boys!

—Dave Mulcahey

Torturers ‘R’ Us

President George Bush denies reality. *By Kristian Williams*

THE NATIONAL DEBATE on torture reached a new level in October when the Senate voted 90 to nine to restrict Defense Department interrogation techniques and prohibit the “cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment” of anyone in U.S. custody. The vote came as a major rebuke to President George Bush, who threatened to veto the military spending bill if the proposals were included.

Bush responded to the vote by publicly defending the United States’ existing practices. During his Latin American tour in early November, he said, “We are gathering information about where the terrorists may be hiding. We are trying to disrupt their plots and plans. Anything we do ... in this effort, any activity we conduct is within the law. We do not torture.”

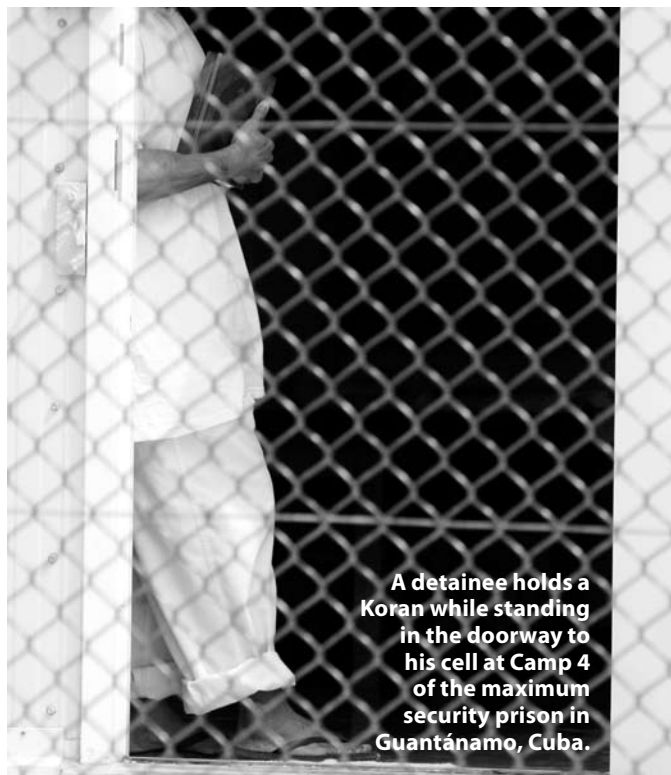
Yet earlier that very week, Vice President Dick Cheney pleaded with Republican senators in a closed door meeting to exempt the CIA from the cruelty ban. The administration clearly does not like having its bluff called.

To understand the panic buzzing through the White House, you have to understand its philosophy. The administration has consistently read the law so as to minimize the protections offered to official enemies and maximize the power of the president. This approach has shaped almost every aspect of the “war on terror”—the suspension of the Geneva Conventions in Afghanistan, the designation of prisoners as “enemy combatants,” the establishment of

“military tribunals” immune to the usual rules of evidence and procedure, and the effort to establish prisons beyond any court’s jurisdiction (first in Guantánamo, now secretly in Eastern Europe), as well as the exceedingly narrow definition of “torture” crafted by the Justice Department in 2002.

In keeping with this approach, the administration has cast certain adversaries beyond the protection of human rights law. As John McCain, the author of the Senate’s anti-torture amendment, explained, “a strange legal determination was made that the prohibition in the Convention Against Torture against cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment does not legally apply to foreigners held outside the U.S. They can, apparently, be treated inhumanely. This is the administration’s position. ... What all this means is that America is the only country in the world that asserts a legal right to engage in cruel and inhuman treatment.” The proposed changes would close the loophole.

President Bush is clearly in a precarious position. The McCain amendment is just one of a whole barrage of challenges currently aimed at his style of government. Along with the Senate’s vote on the treatment of prisoners, the administration is facing uncertain domestic and diplomatic consequences following the revelation of secret CIA prisons in Poland and Romania. At the same time, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture is demanding full access to the captives at Guantánamo Bay, and the Supreme Court has agreed to rule on the legitima-



A detainee holds a Koran while standing in the doorway to his cell at Camp 4 of the maximum security prison in Guantánamo, Cuba.

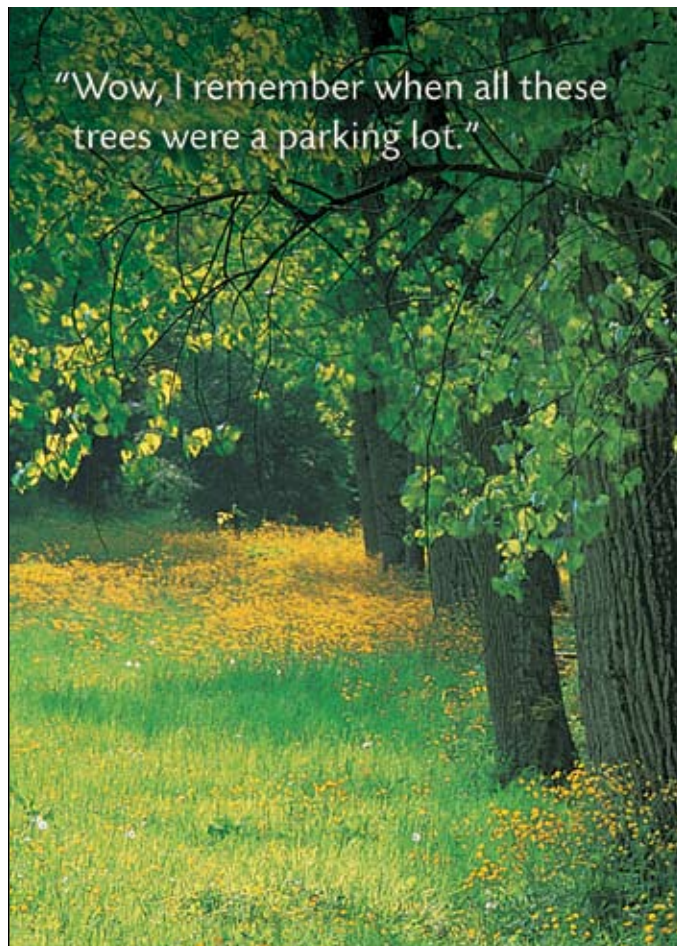
cy of the planned military tribunals. In September, soldiers with the 82nd Airborne gave Human Rights Watch detailed accounts of brutality against prisoners—including beatings with baseball bats—and the refusal of commanding officers to intervene. More recently, the Army indicted five soldiers with the 75th Ranger Regiment—bringing the total number facing discipline for abusing prisoners to 230 since the beginning of the war in Afghanistan. And an Italian prosecutor has indicted 13 CIA operatives for kidnapping a Muslim cleric in Milan and flying him to Egypt to be tortured.

The question of torture also links to the broader crisis concerning the legitimacy of the war itself. Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Colin Powell told the U.N. Security Council that Iraq had trained al-Qaeda in the use of chemical and biological weapons. The source for this erroneous information was an al-Qaeda trainer, Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi,

who was arrested in Pakistan, handed over to the CIA and sent to Egypt for questioning. Recently declassified Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) documents show that intelligence analysts recognized the Iraq-al-Qaeda connection as fictitious *before* Powell's speech. A DIA report concluded that "it is more likely this individual [al-Libi] is intentionally misleading the debriefers." And why would he do that? Well, as a former FBI agent involved with the investigation told the *New Yorker*, "Administration officials were always pushing us to come up with links, but there weren't any. The reason they got bad information is that they beat it out of him."

Under the circumstances, Bush's "We do not torture" has all the persuasive force of Nixon's "I am not a crook." ■

KRISTIAN WILLIAMS is the author of *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* and the forthcoming *American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination*.



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White Phosphorus Lies

Did the Pentagon use chemical weapons indiscriminately in Fallujah? *By Frida Berrigan*

JUST WHEN IT seemed the Iraq war couldn't get worse, the United States admitted on November 16 that forces in Fallujah did use white phosphorus (WP) as an incendiary weapon against enemy combatants. However, the Pentagon continues to deny that soldiers used WP—a "spontaneously flammable" and "extremely toxic inorganic substance," according to the Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventative Medicine—against civilians.

This admission, a reversal of the military's previous denials that the substance was used as a weapon at all, came after protests at the U.S. embassy in Rome that were sparked by the airing of *Fallujah: The Hidden Massacre*, a documentary by Sigfrido Ranucci and Maurizio Torrealta, on Italian television.

In the documentary, Torrealta, a news editor at Italian state media company RAI, interviews U.S. soldiers and Iraqi human rights advocates, and shows pictures of the havoc wreaked by white phosphorus. The film set off a firestorm of controversy about interpretations of the Geneva Convention: When is a device that can indiscriminately burn civilians to death a banned weapon and when is it a defensive mechanism for hiding troop movements? An Army fact sheet admits it is both, noting that while WP "is used primarily as a smoke agent," it can "also function as an anti-personnel flame compound capable of causing serious burns."

For Jeff Engelhart, a former Marine with the First Infantry Division that fought the Battle of Fallujah in November 2004, these questions of interpretation are moot. "I do know that white



A 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron OV-10 Bronco aircraft fires white phosphorus rockets to mark a target for an air strike during tactical air control training.

USAF

phosphorus was used. White phosphorus kills indiscriminately," he says in the documentary.

On November 8, U.S. Marine Major Tim Keefe told Reuters that "suggestions that U.S. forces targeted civilians with these weapons are simply wrong." But there is nothing simple about it.

Protocol III of the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons bans the use of incendiary weapons, meaning "any weapon or munition which is primarily designed to set fire to objects or to cause burn injury to persons." The United States has not signed the protocol. The Pentagon initially denied using WP as a weapon, arguing that while WP could "set fire to objects or cause burn injury to persons," that is not the task for which the weapon is "primarily designed." Rather, the military claims that WP—known as "Whiskey Pete," or "Willy Pete" on the battlefield—is a legitimate tool for obscuring troop

actions. Now military sources insist that WP is not a *chemical* weapon (banned under Geneva Conventions), but a conventional one.

From the military's own reports, it is clear white phosphorus was used for multiple reasons in Fallujah. In the March/April 2005 issue of *Field and Artillery Magazine*, Captain James T. Cobb wrote an "after action" review of the November 2004 Battle of Fallujah, a battle he describes as the "most fierce urban fighting for Marines since the Battle of Hue City in Vietnam in 1968."

Cobb and his co-authors continue, "White phosphorus proved to be an effective and versatile munition," useful as "a potent psychological weapon against the insurgents ... We fired 'shake and bake' missions at insurgents, using WP to flush out them out and HE [high explosives] to take them out."

It is also clear that U.S. Marines fired WP indiscriminately

in Fallujah. Darrin Mortenson, a reporter for the San Diego-area *North County Times*, was embedded with the Camp Pendleton Marines in Fallujah. In an April 11, 2004 article, Mortenson describes a daily pattern that escalated during the Battle of Fallujah. Nicholas Bogert, a 22-year-old mortar team leader, directs his team to fire countless rounds of "shake and bake" into Fallujah neighborhoods, "never knowing what the targets were or what damage the resulting explosions caused."

In a November 8 interview with "Democracy Now," Torrealta said that he began his investigation after seeing photographs from the Studies Centre of Human Rights & Democracy in Fallujah, including detailed color images of residents, some dead in their beds, with their clothes largely intact, but their skin melted to the consistency of leather.

In the same program, Lieutenant Colonel Steve Boylan, a spokesman for the U.S. military in Iraq, said that the allegations of WP's use against civilians was "tantamount to propaganda, falsehood and rumors."

When asked about the photos of people burned to the bone while their clothing remained untouched, he theorizes that the damage could have been inflicted by a suicide bomber. "That can happen from massive explosions. If you look at the car bombs that the terrorists use today, you have the same effects from car bombs [or] from suicide vests."

Boylan may assert that the use of WP is legal and worth the price paid by civilians. But James Nachtwey, the award-winning war photographer, wrote in 1985 that if everyone "could see for themselves what white phosphorus does to the face of a child ... they would understand that nothing is worth letting things get to the point where that happens to even one person, let alone thousands." ■

ON NOVEMBER 14 LEWIS Lapham, who has been editor of *Harper's* since 1983, announced his retirement. Lapham is the originator of the widely imitated "Harper's Index" and the author of numerous books, including *Gag Rule* and, most recently, *With the Beatles*. He recently spoke by phone with *In These Times* from the *Harper's* offices in New York.

What do you think is the most important issue facing our country today?

The most important issue is how we define national security. The administration likes to define national security in terms of military aircraft, troops, nuclear weapons and aircraft carriers. In truth, national security rests in the strength, health and intelligence of the American people. If we can learn to define national security in those terms, we would possibly reverse the trend of our current politics.

You argue that the United States has been transformed from a democracy to a plutocracy. Could you elaborate?

First you can see the rapidly widening gulf between rich and poor. In 1974 the ratio between what a factory worker earned and what a CEO of the same company earned was something in the neighborhood of 14 to one. Today it's closer to 431 to 1. And you see there's been enormous wealth gathered in the prosperous decades of the '80s and '90s, but most of that wealth has come into the hands of fewer and fewer people. The average wage of the working man has actually declined in the last 20 years, while the corporate pay scale has mounted to the heavens.

You also see it in the privatization of public infrastructure. In the late '60s and early '70s, it was still possible to associate the word "public" with the common good—public square, public school, public health and so on. And "private" tended to connote selfish greed. Now, the meanings have been reversed. Public is now a synonym for slum, incompetence, corruption and so forth, and private is the source of all things bright and beautiful—private school, private stream, private plane and so on. And so the impulse has been toward plutocracy, and it's celebrated in all of our news media. Every week we get a picture of a new handsome, debonair, exciting CEO on the cover of *Forbes*, *Fortune*, or *Business Week*. They glory in the radiance of money.

You recently wrote, "It does no good to ask the weakling's pointless question, 'Is America a fascist state?'" How does the America of George W. Bush differ from the Italy of Mussolini or the Spain of Franco?

Well, it comes with a smiling face. We don't yet have as many parades. I was borrowing from an essay written by Umberto Eco a number of years ago in the *New York Review of Books*, in which he attempted to find the common denominators in the various forms of fascism that

were in place in the '20s and '30s in Europe. He was taking into account not only Mussolini's Italy, but Hitler's Germany, Franco's Spain and Stalin's Russia. Now all of those are different in very important ways, but there are certain common themes, many of which I've found in our own increasingly authoritarian government.

Lapham's Way

By Aaron Sarver

And one of those themes is the recent merging of religion and politics?

Yes, Eco refers to the religious elements in Germany, "the Volk." It's not necessarily Christian, but it points to a divine presence, the notion of some supreme leader and absolute truth. With religion you often run up against people who already know all the answers and don't find any need to argue the point. This goes against the democratic ideas based on the Enlightenment notions of reason and argument.

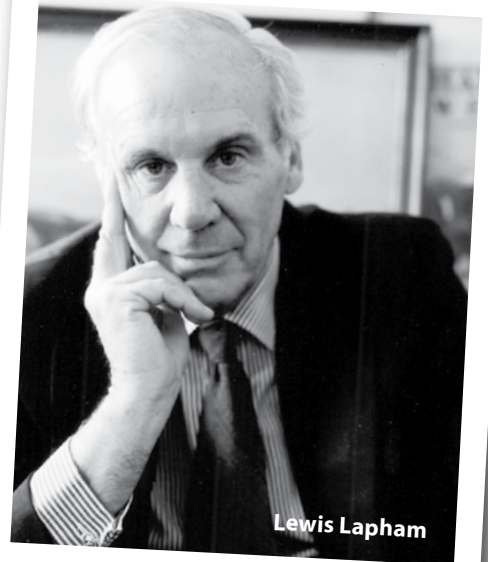
I listen to you, you listen to me, and between the two of us we maybe find a third way, as Clinton used to say. With religion there isn't any, it's either true and revealed, or false and heretical. That is a tone of mind that you do not want to have running your political systems.

Do you think those in power care about what dissenters such as yourself say?

They only care about it if it can take some form of political force. In other words, I think the Bush administration is beginning to care about the rising tide of criticism and the more general recognition of its dishonesty and incompetence. Observations that three or four years ago would have been considered leftist or extreme are beginning to show up in the president's approval ratings.

Do we have any reasons to be optimistic about our country?

I think so. I have reasons in the many young people I encounter as the editor of *Harper's*. More young people today are anxious to get into the political melee than, say, in the middle of the '80s. ■



Lewis Lapham

PHOTO COURTESY OF MELVILLE HOUSE BOOKS

To hear an audio interview with Lapham, visit fireontheprairie.com. In *These Times'* monthly radio show.



In and Out Burglars

The Republican majority's greatest policy success—outside of gerrymandering—is the K Street Project, DeLay and Norquist's scheme to fill the plum lobbying jobs with ex-staffers, loyalists and cronies.

CRAIG AARON is the communications director of the national media reform group Free Press (www.freepress.net) and a senior editor of *In These Times*. The views expressed here are his own.

WASHINGTON DIDN'T INVENT the revolving door. Theophilus von Kannel of Philadelphia patented the first one in 1888. But the Washington version—traveling between the public and private sectors—was soon in full swing.

As a D.C. tradition, the revolving door dates to at least 1897, when William McKinley named the head of the First National Bank of Chicago as treasury secretary. Under Bush, it is spinning faster than ever.

The Washington revolving door has many models. There's the administration-to-industry version, in which officials cash in on their insider knowledge. Some civil servants don't even clean out their desks before helping their new bosses. Consider Darleen Druyun, an Air Force procurement officer who secured jobs at Boeing for herself and two family members while pushing through a \$20 billion contract to lease air tankers. She called the deal—which got her nine months in prison—a “parting gift.”

There's also the government-to-lobbyist revolving door. Since 2000, the number of registered federal lobbyists has more than doubled to 34,750 and annual reported lobbying expenditures now top \$2 billion. Leading the charge are ex-congressmen. According to Public Citizen, 43 percent of departing federal legislators since 1998 (excluding those who took another office, died or went to jail) registered as lobbyists. More than half of Republicans leaving office went directly to K Street.

And why not? The money's certainly better: Ex-Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-La.) now gets \$2 million a year from PhRMA, a golden parachute for pushing through the Medicare prescription boondoggle. The Republican majority's greatest policy success—outside of gerrymandering—is the K Street Project, Tom DeLay and Grover Norquist's scheme to fill the plum lobbying jobs with their ex-staffers, loyalists and cronies.

The revolving door also works in reverse—lobbyists and executives join the government to regulate their former employers. One study found that more than 100 high-level Bush officials oversee industries they used to represent (and it missed a few). The poster-child here is J. Stephen Griles, who pulled off a double-reverse spin—industry-to-government and back again.

Griles was appointed as the Interior Department's No. 2 after years of shilling for the oil and mining industries. Once there, he not only failed to recuse himself from cases involving former clients, but stayed on his old lobbying firm's payroll, collecting \$284,000 a year. Then

he left to lobby for industry with Andrew Lundquist, the Cheney aide who ran the infamous Energy Task Force.

But Griles got caught in what Carl Hiaasen calls “the glistening slime trail left by lobbyist Jack Abramoff.” At a November hearing of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, a former colleague accused Griles of trying to shut down a casino that threatened the business of an Abramoff client. To get Griles' aid, Abramoff allegedly funneled \$250,000 to an Astroturf eco-group run by a Griles crony. Abramoff also offered Griles a job at his firm.

Seizing on the stench of corruption, more than a dozen groups formed the Revolving Door Working Group (www.revolvingdoor.info) to push a series of sensible reform proposals: doubling the one-year “cooling-off” period in which ex-officials cannot lobby their former colleagues; requiring officials to disclose job negotiations taking place while they're still in office; revoking the special privileges enjoyed by former congressmen if they're registered lobbyists; and improving the frequency and availability of lobbying disclosures, ethics forms and other documents.

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) and Rep. Marty Meehan (D-Mass.) already have introduced legislation addressing many of these concerns. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) are likely to introduce their own after McCain completes his hearings on Abramoff. “They'll pass significant lobbying reform in 2006 before the midterm elections,” predicts Public Citizen's Craig Holman. “The Democrats' polling suggests this is a winner. And Republicans don't want the Democrats to take all the credit.”

Of course, there's reason to be more pessimistic. Democrats have a sordid record on lobbying reform. Bill Clinton issued an executive order in 1993, prohibiting all presidential appointees from lobbying for five years after they left office. But in his final weeks, he rescinded the order, reinstating the paltry one-year ban.

And it's hard to imagine Republicans closing off such a lucrative escape route for their scandal-ridden legislators. Sen. Bob Packwood—forced out of office for his serial sexual harassment—maintains a thriving lobbying practice. Former Rep. Bob Livingston, who resigned because of his own sex scandal, rang up almost \$40 million in lobbying fees from 1999 to 2004.

Can DeLay be far behind? If Tauzin goes for \$2 million, how much might The Hammer fetch on K Street? We could be talking A-Rod money. No wonder he can't stop smiling, even in his mug shot. ■



Jump-Starting a Movement

MANY PARTICIPANTS RETURNED from the Millions More Movement event in Washington D.C. convinced that the October 15 rally was a useful step in community mobilization and political organizing. Some enthusiasts even mark the event, which officially commemorated the 10th anniversary of the 1995 Million Man March, as a seminal step on the way to a new civil rights movement. Others have criticized it as just another feel-good display of speechifying and elite-marking or, a little more charitably, as a cathartic response to the Katrina disaster, but little else.

The *Chicago Defender* estimated that the crowd on the National Mall peaked at “more than 100,000 people,” while rally organizers publicly put the number at “more than a million.” One member of the organizing committee who requested anonymity said the crowd was 250,000, at best. But, he noted, the focus of the event will be on what happens after the participants go back home.

“This is more than a march, we’re building a movement,” hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean chanted to the crowd, reinforcing a theme repeated by speakers throughout the day. Organizers seemed especially attuned to the criticism of the 1995 march’s race and gender exclusivity, as well as its lack of programmatic focus and follow-through, designing it specifically to answer those criticisms. The event was open to women and men of all races and sexual orientation (although there was a dispute about organizers blocking a gay speaker). And a Movement mission statement included a list of specific agenda items—ending police brutality, racial profiling, the incarceration epidemic, and substandard education and healthcare, among other things. And speaker after speaker stressed the importance of serious follow-through.

“We have seen an unparalleled number of black leaders of organizations come together to speak to America and the world with one voice,” said Minister Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam and the prime mover of both the Million Man March and the anniversary rally. “This has never happened before in the world. A new day is dawning in America, starting with our unity. This is more than a moment in time.”

And indeed there was a wide and unprecedented array of black leadership supporting the rally. The National Urban League joined the New Black Panther Party, the Progressive Baptist Convention and dozens of unlikely allies as co-sponsors. Economist and feminist Julianne Malveaux joined Black Nationalist

ideologue and Kwanzaa creator Maulana Karenga and musician/activist Harry Belafonte in addressing the crowd. The rally managed to unite strains of the black freedom movement that have long been at odds.

Most participants agreed they were impelled by a sense of crisis. “That rally, quite simply, was an urgent call to action,” said Conrad Worrill, chair of the National Black United Front. “As a people, we are more damaged today than ever before in our history and we need a movement to repair the damage.”

The confluence of events—from the disastrous aftermath of Katrina, to the naked colonialism of the Iraq occupation, to the bulging population of black inmates within the prison industrial complex and the growing menace of police brutality—certainly has stoked a new sense of crisis within black America. Many speakers used the aftermath of Katrina to highlight the racial disparities that continue to plague the nation. In fact, the first order of business on the Movement’s agenda is an emergency fund for Katrina victims.

Although this gathering differed from the original in both its intra- and interracial outreach, the turnout was appreciably lower. Organizers pitched the event as racially inclusive, but there were few non-blacks in the audience and hardly any among the speakers. De-emphasizing the event’s racial focus failed to attract non-blacks but also seemed to dampen the black attendance. This paradox besets progressive organizers as they seek to enlist people of all races in a new movement against the ascendant right wing.

In this respect, Farrakhan represents a thorny problem. He is widely respected in the black community, and his charisma and intelligence mark him as a media-genic spokesman for many progressive causes. His analysis of U.S. foreign policy differs little from the standard left critique. He is on target with his assessment of the neo-conservative clique and its policy objectives. His ecumenical and interracial outreach has forged alliances between disparate groups.

But his separatist prescriptions—in his speech, he advocated separate ministries for black people—and his overweening religiosity make many progressives wince. What’s more, traces of authoritarianism, racism and homophobia pepper his history.

His paternity hovers over the Millions More Movement, just as it did the Million Man March. And it adds another level of difficulty to the question of whether black Americans can jump-start a movement simply by willing it into existence. ■

De-emphasizing the Millions More march’s racial focus failed to attract non-blacks but also seemed to dampen black attendance.

SALIM MUWAKKIL is a senior editor at *In These Times*, a contributing columnist to the *Chicago Tribune* and a *Crime and Communities Media Fellow* of the *Open Society Institute*.



House Call *By Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.)*

The War on Our Children

We must stop accepting that low-wage, low-benefit part-time jobs are the best our children can do. We need to ensure a livable wage for all workers.

FUNDING A WAR in Iraq and providing tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans does more damage than Republicans in Congress care to admit. As they clamor on about patriotism, their funding priorities are costing America its future.

The Republican Congress is placing hurdles in front of our children that are nearly impossible to clear. At every turn, from age zero to 18, roadblocks have been erected that block them from reaching their potential.

Since 2002, Republican budgets have cut nearly 7,000 slots for children in low-income families to receive Head Start services. These cuts were made despite studies demonstrating that Head Start children are more likely to graduate from high school and are less likely to repeat a grade. Head Start students are also less likely to commit a crime than low-income children who do not attend Head Start. But such empirical findings mean little to a party that prefers its policies based on faith.

After slashing Head Start budgets, it seems only logical for Republicans to next target poor mothers with children under 6 years old. A recent Republican budget proposal would require these mothers to double their weekly work hours from 20 to 40 in order to remain eligible for job training and vocational education. Yet that plan fails to provide \$10.5 billion for childcare funding that the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimated would be needed for mothers to afford to work the longer hours and maintain their benefits. The blatant hypocrisy would be comical if it weren't true.

As our children—unprepared for the challenges they'll face—reach public schools, they will get less help than ever before. After taking credit for "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), President Bush and his Republican allies wasted no time in underfunding the Act, thereby ensuring schools could not meet new, stricter achievement standards. As of June 2005, the House Republicans have shortchanged public schools by \$40 billion since the passage of the much-lauded NCLB law. At the same time, yearly progress tests created by NCLB to determine if individual students are improving in math and reading show almost a quarter of schools failing to show improvement on state student tests.

If those weren't enough obstacles to place in front of our children, the Republicans want to force the average student borrower to pay an additional \$5,800 for college. The single most effective springboard to

a well-paying job is a college degree. So, this year the Republicans are proposing \$14.3 billion in cuts to federal student aid programs.

At every turn, our future is threatened—not by mythical weapons of mass destruction or by the lack of prayer in the classroom—but by policies that continually rob our children of the skills they need to compete. The results of such policies speak for themselves. Since President Bush took office, 1.7 million more Americans live in poverty and the average median income has declined \$2,710. Meanwhile, the federal minimum wage, \$5.15 an hour, has not been increased since 1997, and has its lowest purchasing power since 1990.

Recently, the impact of cutting our children out of America's future became abundantly clear when a new Wal-Mart opened in my home community of Oakland, California. Some 11,000 people applied for 400 jobs that pay less than \$20,000 a year and offer few benefits. It was a microcosm of the fate of working families everywhere, forced to get by with far too little.

Working together, America can do better. We can improve the economic outlook for our children by investing in their education. We can add funding for student loans and grants. We can provide vocational education and job training.

We must stop accepting that low-wage, low-benefit part-time jobs are the best our children can do. And for all workers, we need to ensure a livable wage and provide for paid family and medical leave.

Not surprisingly, two bills to do just that have been introduced by Democrats and were quickly buried by Republicans. In May, Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) introduced The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2005, which would have raised the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour over two years. In June, I introduced the Paid Family and Medical Leave Act, which would build on the highly successful Family and Medical Leave Act by providing up to 12 weeks of paid benefits to workers who take time off for reasons allowed under the new Act. Both bills would easily improve the lives of working families, but the priorities of this Republican-controlled Congress are focused in other areas.

If the United States can find \$250 billion for a failed war in Iraq and give American millionaires an average tax break of \$41,574 apiece in 2006, then the most affluent country in the world can find the funds to improve its schools and workplaces. Our future depends on it. ■

REP. PETE STARK
has served
California's 13th
District since 1973.
He is
currently the
ranking
minority member
on the Health
Subcommittee.



The *Times* Disses Women

THE *NEW YORK Times* has serious female troubles, and it's time to call them on it. Why are they are so intent on repeatedly using sloppy journalism to suggest that the women of America want to turn back the hands of time and re-embrace the feminine mystique? The paper has been reeling from serial scandals, in which the failure of its editors and management to scrutinize the claims made by its journalists has come under withering criticism. As one letter writer put it, "All *Times* bylines now must be considered suspect."

Amen, especially when bylines are reporting about women's alleged repudiation of feminism. Over the past three years, the *Times* has trafficked in stories about accomplished women wanting to chuck work and a career in favor of diapers, mac-and-cheese, and deference to men. The latest salvo was the excerpt from Maureen Dowd's new book *Are Men Necessary?* which ran in the magazine under the title, "What's a Modern Girl to Do?"

Beginning with Lisa Belkin's instantly infamous *Times* magazine cover story in October 2003 "The Opt-Out Revolution," which evoked stacks of irate letters from women around the country, the *Times* seems to take perverse delight in goading women about the alleged bankruptcy of feminism. But the crucial criticism here is that, much like Belkin, Dowd based her story about all women secretly wanting to morph into some weird hybrid of June Cleaver and Jayne Mansfield on anecdote, the use of a small circle of the reporter's friends made to represent a "trend," and the distortion of statistics and social science studies.

Belkin's "trend" piece was based on a handful of white Princeton graduates (like Belkin herself) who could afford not to work because their husbands had high six-figure salaries. Nor did they leave their careers by "choice": They were forced out by unforgiving workplaces that insisted they work 60-80 hours a week or quit. And most importantly, Belkin fudged her data.

More recently, the *Times* gave us its front-page story about female students at Yale asserting they would deign to stick their toes into the career pool ever so briefly after graduation, but that 60 percent of them would immediately retreat and become stay-at-home mothers once they had children. Katha Pollitt eviscerated this piece in *The Nation*, as did Jack Shafer at *Slate*. The author of the story, Louise Story (not surprisingly, Yale '03, and revealed to be not a *Times* reporter but a journalism grad student working on her thesis), showcased only those women who supported her preposter-

ous claim, and even some of them felt misrepresented. Indeed, Pollitt and others found that a vast majority of Yale women had every intention of combining work and child rearing.

But when it comes to bashing feminism, apparently there are no learning curves at the *Times*. Dowd, in her recent piece, asserts that "the perfume of female power is a turnoff for men" and suggests that a purported decline in women offering to pay half the dinner tab is proof that young women no longer want equality. Her evidence is a combination of quotes from acquaintances, her own experiences (me-search as research), and several studies purporting to prove that men flee from accomplished women, and that if a woman is professionally successful her chances of marrying and having children are equivalent to Charles Manson getting elected President. Caryl Rivers and Rosalind Barnett disemboweled Dowd's slipshod reporting in a scathing riposte on Women's eNews. One study Dowd cites is based on the dating preferences of 18-year-old boys; another on the attitudes of men and women born in 1921.

In the article, Dowd refers to women of my vintage as "Jurassic feminists," lumbering around cluelessly as we supposedly fight battles about "whether women should pay for dinner or wear padded bras." Instead, we "should have focused only on big economic issues." How does Dowd think that women suddenly got to be doctors, lawyers and even a regular columnist at the *Times*?

Meanwhile, outside the rarefied precincts of the *Times*, two-thirds of American women are consigned into low-paying, traditionally "female" jobs. Most of them would be delighted to make what male construction workers or bank managers make, and the last thing on their minds would be to do what Dowd prescribes: "Play hard to get but stay soft as a kitten."

The public editor at the *Times*, Byron Calame, should be getting just as much e-mail about this kind of journalistic irresponsibility as it has about other gaffes. By foregrounding the voices of "ordinary" women (who, of course, are anything but) and misreported data, the *Times* seems bent on insisting there is an irrefutable "common sense" out there among women that feminism has been bad for them. But women do not want to go back to 1957, with its legally enforced gender discrimination, its cultural misogyny and its insistence that women should be subservient to men. By suggesting otherwise, the *Times* adds another notch to its growing hash marks of slipshod journalism and does a real disservice to the women of America. ■

Over the past three years, the *New York Times* has trafficked in stories about women wanting to chuck their careers in favor of diapers and deference to men.

SUSAN J. DOUGLAS
is a professor of communications at the University of Michigan and co-author of *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*.



who is

SHERROD BROWN?

BY CHRISTOPHER HAYES

**An unabashed progressive
takes aim at a Senate seat in Ohio**

There are two small but revealing items affixed to Ohio's 13th District congressman Sherrod Brown. On his lapel, he wears not an American flag, but a pin of a yellow bird in a cage. On a Thursday morning in October, as we leave his office to walk to the Capitol for a committee meeting, Brown hands me a bookmark-sized slip of paper that

explains: "The canary represents the struggle for economic and social justice." It recounts how miners once took canaries into the mines so that when the birds died, they knew the air was too toxic to breathe. "Miners were forced to provide for their own protection. No mine safety laws. No trade unions able to help. No real support from their government. ... It has been a 100-year battle between the privileged and the rest of us."

Clipped to Brown's belt is a small blue pedometer, one of a pair worn by him and his wife Connie Schultz, a Pulitzer-Prize winning columnist at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. He walks, or perhaps more accurately, stalks all over Capitol Hill, leading with his chest pitched forward just slightly in a gait that is halfway between a bounce and a prowl. "He never takes the elevator," his spokesperson Joanna Kuebler tells me as we wait for Brown to emerge from a meeting with a group of scientists advocating for nuclear disarmament. When it's time for a vote on the Hill, he eschews the underground subway that whisks members from their office buildings to the Capitol.

Handsome, with a slightly weathered face, curly hair and a deep, warm voice, Brown is universally described as "down to earth." In person he's as unposed as any politician I've ever met. "Those are the columns my wife wrote that won the Pulitzer," he says, dumping a pile of papers into the lap of Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, who's waiting for the underground shuttle as we trot past. "He's a Republican," Brown whispers as we walk away, "but I like him. How could I not? He represents Cooperstown."

Brown, a huge baseball fan and an avid

athlete, will need to marshal every last bit of his considerable energy in the next year as he seeks to become the first Democratic senator from the state of Ohio since John Glenn retired in 1998. He faces a primary challenge from Iraq war veteran and Internet darling Paul Hackett; if he wins the primary, he'll face Republican incumbent Mike DeWine, a senator with some of the lowest approval ratings in the country, but a seat that the Republicans will zealously defend. With Ohio still the nation's premier political battlefield, the race will be one of next year's most-watched campaigns: If a bedrock economic populist like Brown can win in a red state, it will explode the post-Clinton conventional wisdom that anything resembling "class warfare" is a non-starter for the Democrats.

But Brown's decision to enter the race after first saying he wouldn't prompted paroxysms of recrimination and anger in the blogosphere. "Brown's indecision created an ugly and totally unnecessary scene," wrote blogger Lindsay Beyerstein, one of Hackett's most prominent online supporters. "If he'd declared in the first place, Hackett probably wouldn't have challenged him for the nomination. Now, there's probably going to be a nasty little primary and lasting bad blood amongst Ohio Democrats. These are very real costs that Brown chose to inflict on his party."

Hackett, whom many bloggers treat like the local boy made good, and who was recently the subject of a glowing profile in *Mother Jones* titled "The Democrat Who Fought," provides the blogosphere an opportunity to prove, unequivocally, its own influence. "The reason to support Hackett

over Brown is simple," wrote Beyerstein, "if Hackett wins (and he can win), the progressive blogosphere makes history."

Blog opinion on the race is by no means uniform. Many support Brown, but it's a strange feature of the blogosphere that a newcomer to politics like Hackett is widely considered a known quantity, while Brown, who's spent his entire adult life in public office, is a mystery. One skeptical blogger on the Web site Swing State Project summed up his reservations with a post titled: "Who is Sherrod Brown?"

Brown lacks the national profile of colleagues like Dennis Kucinich and Bernie Sanders, but for the duration of his six-and-a-half terms in office, he has been one of Congress's most stalwart progressives. "I've known him for many years," says Sanders. "What's very clear is that Sherrod Brown knows which side of the struggle he is on." And when Brown's friend John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland AFL-CIO, says, "Sherrod Brown is one of us," he means it in the literal, familial sense. Brown's older daughter Emily is a union organizer for SEIU. When I met Brown, Emily had just lost a union election in a New Jersey nursing home. "She was crushed," Brown told me. "I mean, it's horrible. Have you ever sat and watched an election? They count the votes publicly and you can tell within 15 votes what's going to happen, and the workers are scared. ... It's pretty depressing for the organizer but it's more depressing for the workers."

If Brown had announced a decision to enter the U.S. Senate race over the summer when he was being recruited by the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, he likely wouldn't be facing a primary

challenger and the “netroots,” as progressive bloggers have taken to calling themselves, would be four-square behind him. But Brown demurred. His first marriage had ended in divorce, and he was aware of the strain that a campaign can place on a relationship, particularly a new one. After spending most of his first year of marriage in D.C. organizing against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), he and Schultz had not even moved in together. Brown was preparing for Emily’s wedding and sending Schultz’s daughter Caitlin off to college. And there were also questions about how a Senate candidacy would affect Schultz’s job at the *Plain Dealer*.

Some Democrats, frustrated with Brown’s dithering, are convinced that he was reluctant simply because he wasn’t sure he could win. “I think he’s cautious,” says one Democratic Hill staffer who knows Ohio politics well and supports Brown. “I think that’s the real reason. He values the seat he has and he’s only willing to give it up if he’s got a really good shot at winning.”

On August 17, Brown posted a letter on his Web site GrowOhio.org, announcing he wouldn’t run for Senate, and since 17th

District Congressman Tim Ryan had also declined to run, it looked like the Democrats might have trouble finding a candidate. That’s when Hackett stepped in. The 43-year-old attorney gained national attention this summer when he returned from a tour of duty in Iraq to his suburban Cincinnati home and ran in a special election to replace the 2nd District’s Congressman, Rob Portman, who’d been appointed United States Trade Representative.

At first Hackett, who’d never held an office higher than city council in a small suburb, escaped the attention of the national media and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. But his campaign was followed avidly by blogs, and Democracy for America, which together raised more than \$500,000 and pushed him into the national spotlight. Hackett’s credibility to talk about the mistakes in Iraq, coupled with his tough-talking demeanor (he called Bush a “son of a bitch” and Rush Limbaugh a “fatass drug addict”) made the netroots swoon. It was like Howard Dean in uniform. Hackett ultimately lost the August 2 election in an overwhelmingly Republican district by just four points. A star, of sorts, was born.

In mid-September, Hackett started to lay the groundwork for a Senate run and paid Brown a call at his D.C. office. Brown had supported Hackett during the special election, paying the salary of online organizer Tim Tagaris and loaning Hackett his trusted political organizer Dan Lucas. Hackett says that in the meeting Brown spoke “in a general way” about supporting him in the Senate race; Brown says it was clear that he gave no endorsement. In either case, the take-away was that Brown wasn’t getting in the race.

But three weeks later, Brown changed his mind. Schultz was able to make sure his candidacy wouldn’t jeopardize her job at the *Plain Dealer*; Emily was married; Caitlin had gone off to college; friends and colleagues kept urging Brown to run; and as Schultz put it, “We moved into a really new house where we could open a window without a hammer, and we both said, ‘There is a real danger here of getting too comfortable, and we didn’t work this hard to get too comfortable.’”

In early October, Brown called both Hackett and DeWine to let them know he was in. “Telling those two guys,” he says, “it wasn’t the most fun day of my life.”

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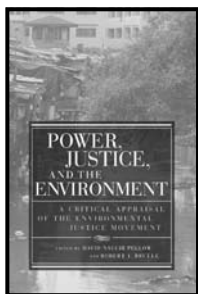
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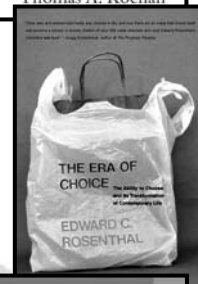
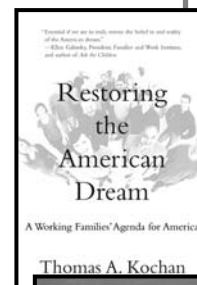
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Born to run

Sherrod Brown was born in Mansfield, Ohio in 1952, the youngest of three sons. His father Charles was a physician. His mother Emily hailed from Georgia and was an early supporter of the civil rights movement, introducing her boys to political activism at an young age. Sherrod was elected president of his high school student council. "He caused people a lot of headaches because he was such an activist," says his mother. "The principal didn't really care for him at all."

In 1970, he and his friends organized a march in Mansfield for the first Earth Day. "We did this really cool march and we had a really big crowd," says Brown with pride. "But we get down to the square and none of us had thought about what you do when you get down there. We didn't have any speakers, and it was like, 'Oh, shit.' So we just disbanded."

Brown enrolled at Yale, where he split his time between Russian Studies and campaign work for liberal candidates, including George McGovern. He so impressed Don Kindt, his local Democratic County Chairman, that the next spring, when Brown was back at Yale finishing up his senior year, Kindt called Brown and asked him to run for state representative. "I remember him calling me," says Sherrod's older brother Charles, who was in Yale Law School at the time. "'You just can't believe this, this is the most exciting news. Don Kindt wants me to run!'"

Sherrod graduated and moved back home, where his father, a Republican, was initially skeptical. "My dad says, 'I'm not voting for you, you're too young,'" says Sherrod. "But he helped a lot." Mrs. Brown recruited neighborhood kids to lick stamps and stuff envelopes in the basement of their house, and Charles spent nearly the whole semester in Mansfield running the campaign. By the time the election rolled around, Sherrod had knocked on 20,000 doors, nearly half the households in the district. In a stunning upset, he beat the Republican incumbent. She never saw it coming.

In 1982 at age 29, after eight years in the state House, Brown was elected Secretary of State. He spent two terms in Columbus, where his signature effort was voter registration outreach. He convinced McDonald's to print voter registration forms on their

tray liners. "You could see voter registration cards with ketchup and mustard on them," he says, "and we accepted them."

Brown's first electoral defeat came in 1990, at the hands of a Hamilton County Commissioner with a franchise name: now-scandal-ridden governor Bob Taft. Taft's media consultant was none other than one-time Nixon aide and current head of Fox News, Roger Ailes. Brown says, "It was the worst campaign I've ever run." By all accounts the race for governor was brutal and the ads vicious. At one point, Brown showed up at Taft's campaign office and confronted him. The scene quickly devolved into a shouting match.

After the defeat, Brown moved back to northeastern Ohio and jumped into a crowded primary for an open congressional seat near his old home district outside Cleveland. He won the primary and immediately began a district-wide bike tour that passed through every township. It worked to great effect. He reports in his first book, *Congress from the Inside*, that in a debate with his opponent late in the race he challenged her to name the high schools in the two largest towns in the district. She couldn't. He also made a series of promises, including a pledge to pay for his own health care out-of-pocket until Congress passed universal coverage. For the past 13 years, he's kept that pledge, turning down the insurance offered to

members and purchasing his own, until recently, when at the cajoling of his wife, he joined her plan.

A Capitol story

Brown entered Congress at a heady time, one of 110 freshmen in the most diverse House class in history. Bill Clinton had ended the Democrats' exile, and for the first time in more than a decade the party had control of both the White House and Capitol Hill. Two years later, of course, after Clinton's health plan had gone down in defeat and Gingrich had assiduously laid the groundwork for an insurrection, 54 House seats swung from Democrats to Republicans, ending 40 years of Democratic control. Brown barely survived that year's anti-incumbent sentiment to return for a second term to a Congress in which, as he wrote in *Congress from the Inside*, the "sometimes chaotic, no-one-seems-to-be-in-charge days of the Democratic majority were over. A hierarchical, military-like style with one man in charge was in place."

The "man in charge" has changed from Newt Gingrich to Tom DeLay, but for the last decade, life as a Democratic congressman has been frustrating if not downright depressing. "It's Kabuki theater," says Kuebler. "I stand over here and make a speech. You stand over there and say a speech. Then we pass what the Republicans want." The majority rarely allows amendments



Brown always walks—never rides—in parades.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BROWN FAMILY



**Brown on Thanksgiving, 2004:
He often plays guitar to relax.**

or opposition bills to come to a vote, and any Democratic changes to legislation that do make it out of committee are promptly gutted before reaching the floor. Perhaps most maddeningly, House Republicans now hold votes open two to three hours past the customary voting period while they break enough kneecaps to win. In a 2003 op-ed about the Medicare vote, Brown described one Republican hiding in the Democratic cloakroom to avoid the bullying of DeLay's enforcers. These votes are, "always in the middle of the night," Brown wrote. "Always after the press had passed their deadlines. Always after the American people had turned off the news and gone to bed."

Despite all this, Brown seems to relish the legislative process. When I ask him if he ever feels that being a minority-party congressman is an exercise in futility, he says "Well, the one thing about this place is that if you focus on an issue, particularly one that other members don't know anything about, you can really get something done."

One such issue is tuberculosis, the global scourge that infects one third of the world's population and kills 2 million people every year. After Joanne Carter, the legislative director for the NGO Results, first broached the topic of TB with Brown in 1997, he began using his position as ranking Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Health

subcommittee to lobby for increased funding. He traveled with public health advocate Paul Farmer to Haiti and visited Siberia, where rates of multi-drug resistant TB are frighteningly high. "It was an issue that was dying for lack of attention," says Carter. "He saw that as an opportunity. It was kind of an ego-less thing. It wasn't about 'this is my issue,' it was more: 'Who can I work with to get more resources for this and make sure the resources get better spent.'" In 1997 Congress appropriated no funds for combating global TB and today it budgets more than \$90 million. "He certainly deserves some of the credit for that," says Carter. "He helped create attention for this out of nothing."

Other than public health, the issue for which Brown is best known has been his energetic and sustained opposition to the free trade agreements pushed by both the Clinton and Bush White Houses. In his second book, *The Myths of Free Trade*, Brown argues that "[a]n unregulated global economy is a threat to all of us," from "the child in Avon Lake, Ohio, who eats raspberries grown in Guatemala by poorly paid farmers who use pesticides banned in the United States," to "the Chinese prison camp laborer."

As wages in the United States have continued to stagnate and the trade deficit explodes, free-trade agreements face stiffer opposition among Democrats. While NAFTA passed with support from 40 percent of Democrats in the House, CAFTA passed with the support of only 7 percent.

For almost all of the last year, Brown was in D.C. coordinating the effort to block CAFTA, which will create a NAFTA-like "free-trade" agreement between the United States, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic. While corporate America pushed the bill hard with talk of opening markets, Brown pointed out that the combined purchasing power of the countries included in the agreement was roughly equivalent to Columbus, Ohio. He argues that it was cheap labor that CAFTA's corporate supporters were

really after. The agreement was also loaded with intellectual property protections for big American corporations, but included no serious labor or environmental standards.

In an op-ed published on July 24, four days before the vote, Brown predicted, "If the House of Representatives passes the Central American Free Trade Agreement, it will take place in the middle of the night, the normal 15-minute roll call will be extended to about three hours so that House leaders can twist arms, and the legislation will pass by one or two votes." He was exactly right: The bill passed 217 to 215, in an extended vote that gavelled closed just three minutes after midnight. One hundred eighty-seven Democrats voted against the bill, joined by 27 Republicans. (According to *The Hill*, the 15 Democrats who voted for the bill have since reaped their rewards. Pro-CAFTA business interests have hosted more than a dozen fundraisers on their behalf.)

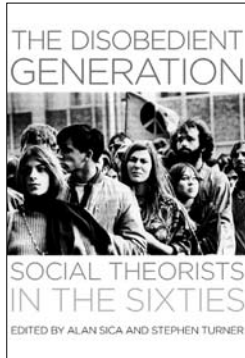
'A nasty little primary'?

One online organizer familiar with Hackett told me that if primary voters thought the race was going to be decided by Iraq, they'd be inclined to vote for Hackett, whereas if they thought it would come down to domestic issues, they'd vote for Brown. Hackett's recent service does give him undeniable credibility on Iraq. But Sherrod Brown is no John Kerry when it comes to the war. He has been an outspoken critic from its inception, and he voted against granting the president authority to wage it. In early 2003, as the United States massed troops and U.N. inspectors were allowed to return, Brown co-wrote a letter to the president, signed by 133 other members of Congress, affirming their belief that the "U.S. should make every attempt to achieve Iraq's disarmament through diplomatic means and with the full support of our allies."

Inspired by a biography of John Quincy Adams that described his practice of reading letters of constituents opposed to slavery, Brown took to the House floor nearly every night to read letters from constituents opposing the war. As the war has dragged on, he voted for some supplemental funding, but repeatedly called for a fuller accounting by the administration of both the mistakes leading up to the war and the billions of dollars that continue to be unaccounted for. He's currently a co-sponsor of a bi-partisan bill calling for the president to present a plan for withdrawal by December 31 and to begin removing troops by next October.

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Hackett says that because Brown voted for the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, which expressed "the sense of Congress" that the United States should "support efforts to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq" and "promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime," Brown voted for the war. "How do you do regime change without invasion?" Hackett asks. "Did he think Tinkerbell was going to come down from outer space and wave her magic wand? I don't think so. Guys like me have to go in and do that. Sherrod Brown voted for regime change; he voted for military intervention in Iraq."

But the text of the bill itself explicitly contradicts that logic. "Nothing in this Act," it reads, "shall be construed to authorize or otherwise speak to the use of United States Armed Forces" with the exception of training and weapons for Iraqi opposition groups. If Hackett's standard is to be applied, then Bernie Sanders and Dennis Kucinich, who both voted for the bill, and Ted Kennedy and the late Paul Wellstone, who were in the Senate where it passed unanimously, are all pro-war.

Brown could hardly believe Hackett's assertion. "Paul's failure to make a distinction between something like that and a vote to attack a sovereign country shows either his inexperience or his willingness to say anything to get elected," Brown said. "My position on the war has been consistent. Over the last three months, from his congressional race to now, he's had three positions. I think he's decided the only way for him to win is to be the most antiwar candidate, but he's danced too much for that."

During his campaign in the 2nd District, Hackett firmly opposed calls for withdrawal, saying, like Bush, that the United States could not "cut and run." On October 19 Democracy for America sent out an e-mail from Hackett asking recipients to sign a pledge that

they would only support candidates who "[a]dvocate for a responsible exit plan with a timeline." Yet when I interviewed Hackett in early November, he called congressional requests for a mandated timeline "absolutely ludicrous," and said instead it was the role of Congress to "pressure the executive branch to issue the order to the Pentagon to develop the plan to withdraw the troops."

More than substantive differences on the issues, those supporting Hackett seem most seduced by his blunt manner. "I'm sure Brown would win my support if it were based solely on a checklist of issue positions," wrote one commenter on Beyerstein's blog Majikthise. "But the thing about Hackett, besides the merely neat and cool netroots stuff, is that the guy's got pizazz. I mean it. Pizazz counts. PH is a straight shootin', hairy chested, bare knuckled, 'bite me' war vet [sic]."

Brown, who's been intimately connected to the progressive grassroots for the entirety of his career, evinces more than a little bafflement at the portion of the new blog constituency that has been lobbying rhetorical hand grenades in his direction. "My wife says it's like when you have a cold sore, you keep running your tongue over it," Brown says. "I keep telling her, 'Connie, stop reading the blogs!' But she can't help herself."

But Brown's a shrewd campaigner, and seems to grasp the potential of online organizing. Back in June, he started GrowOhio.org, a "community-based project with the goal of empowering the grassroots of Ohio's Democratic Party." Upon entering the race, his campaign took out blog ads announcing his candidacy on all of the top progressive blogs. He also hired Jerome Armstrong, formerly of MyDD, and one of the original netroots gurus. He even posted a help wanted ad on the blogs seeking a campaign Web manager. "Hackett started out with an edge in the blogs," Brown tells me, "but we should



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Brown and wife,
Connie Schultz, in
downtown Cleveland

CHRIS HAGAN

have that neutralized soon.”

Part of the reason for all of the rancor in the early stages of the primary is that the eventual opponent, two-term Senator Mike DeWine, seems so tantalizingly beatable. Survey USA ranks DeWine in 97th place among senators, with a 45 percent approval rating. In June, DeWine’s own party’s voters offered him a stinging rebuke, when his son Pat finished fourth in the Republican primary for the special election for Ohio’s 2nd District. Many observers viewed this as fallout from the base’s anger at DeWine for his role in the so-called Gang of 14, who stopped the GOP from carrying out its threat to use the “nuclear option” to get rid of the filibuster. In a recent *Columbus Dispatch* poll, Brown was ahead of DeWine 35 to 31. In the same poll, Hackett was down a point in a head-to-head match-up with DeWine, but earlier polls, without Brown, also had Hackett

beating DeWine.

Hackett argues that with his military service and pro-gun stances he will be immune from the God, guns and gays campaign that Republicans pull out of the drawer for every race against Democrats these days. “2006 won’t be the year of musical chairs for career politicians,” he says. “At the risk of sounding overly impressed with losing the race in the 2nd District, I demonstrated I can cut deeply into Republicans and independents.”

Brown believes his long progressive record will help rather than hinder. “For 10 years I won in a congressional district that was slightly Republican,” Brown says. “I think that voters that don’t agree with me on some issues will still say, ‘Brown’s on my side.’ On economic issues I’m clearly not just in the mainstream, but in the great majority. The overwhelming number of people think the drug companies, the oil companies and the insurance companies rip Americans off. They don’t like the Medicare bill, they want a minimum wage increase and they think our trade agreements hurt our country. On every one of those issues, I beat DeWine.”

“I’ll debate those with anybody.” ■

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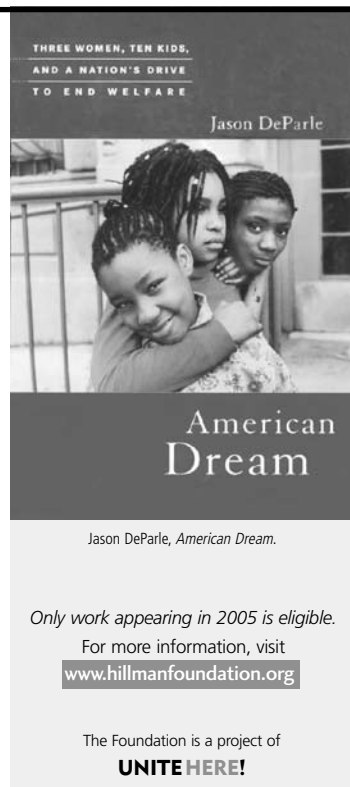
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This Is the Race

A candidate whose record demands progressives' support

BY DAVID SIROTA

AS ANYONE WHO'S SPENT time working on Capitol Hill knows, Washington, D.C., is really just an elaborate pressure system designed to turn corporate money and conservative conventional wisdom into congressional votes. With nearly every bill, there is a disconnect between what lawmakers tell the public they are doing and what they are actually doing and why.

In such a corrupt system, it seems nearly impossible to fight for the progressive agenda while ascending the power structure. The standard narrative says stay pure and be marginalized, or sell out the public and rise. But there are rare leaders who break this stereotype. One of them is Sherrod Brown.

A congressman from the Cleveland sub-

urbs, Brown has both the fiery tenacity of history's progressive champions and the seasoned political skills necessary to forge a different path to prominence. Over the years, he has defied the axiom that legislators who confront Washington's corrupt pressure system don't live to tell the tale. In fact, Brown has flourished.

On nearly every major issue, Brown has held the torch for progressives, even in the dark, lonely days when there was neither a blogosphere or infrastructure designed to support and promote progressive champions.

Over the last three years he stood out for his opposition to the war in Iraq, taking a leadership role early on, when it was most politically dangerous and controversial.

His most high-profile effort to oppose the war came in early 2004 when he had a face-to-face confrontation with Secretary of State Colin Powell—a man usually given wide berth on Capitol Hill due to his personal popularity. Brown demanded to know why Powell, a general, would parrot clearly misguided military policy from “a president who may have been AWOL” from duty. Powell snapped, “Mr. Brown, I won't dignify your comments about the president because you don't know what you are talking about.” But Brown stood his ground and pressed for an answer, creating a made-for-TV confrontation that highlighted the critical issues surrounding the war. The exchange was all over the national news. CNN reported that Brown's performance showed that even with the president's then-high poll ratings “at least some of the Democrats are going to continue to raise questions” about the president's national security credentials and leadership.

In October, Brown announced

his intention to run for the U.S. Senate against weak incumbent Sen. Mike DeWine (R-Ohio). His candidacy provides an opportunity to begin building a bloc of progressives in the Senate, an institution whose few progressives are outgunned by both hard-right Republicans and weak-kneed Democrats.

Before getting to DeWine, however, Brown will face a primary challenge from Iraq war veteran Paul Hackett, who recently lost a special election race for Congress in the Cincinnati suburbs. Hackett's a charismatic candidate and he ran a good House campaign this summer. He's also benefited from the progressive blogosphere, whose funding helped him come close to winning a seat in a largely Republican district.

The question for progressives in this primary race, then, is simple: Do we support Brown, who has been our champion for years, and who can be counted on to take the progressive fight to the Senate? Or do we support Hackett, a guy with charisma and guts who is riding the tide of a never-before-seen phenomenon?

In terms of sheer politics, Brown has the advantage over Hackett in both money raised and proven statewide electoral success—that is not debatable. But beyond the crass questions of political strength are the more important questions of positions and record—the metrics that should concern all progressive donors and activists looking at this race. Brown has shown time and time again that he will not be intimidated by the Washington pressure system, and that he can be both effective and progressive within that system.

Hackett, by contrast, has already shown troubling signs when it comes to the issues.

For instance, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported, this summer when Hackett was running in a more conservative district and President Bush's approval ratings were higher, he “generally opposed a timetable for withdrawal.” At one point, Hackett even adopted President Bush's insulting language, saying he opposed withdrawal because “we



Paul Hackett: Style or substance?

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can't cut and run."

"But now," the *Los Angeles Times* notes, "Hackett has embraced the idea as he faces off in a Democratic Senate primary." While it is certainly positive that Hackett has reversed his earlier position, his willingness to veer so sharply in different directions to fit the moment's political circumstances raises questions about how he would behave in a Senate where the pressure system is designed to make shifting to the right on key issues seem most politically advantageous.

Additionally, Hackett has already dis-

played a willingness to vilify the left when it suits him. For instance, soon after Brown's announcement, Hackett attacked the progressive champion as "a very liberal Democrat" in *Mother Jones* magazine. Days later, the *Toledo Blade* reported that in facing questions about the viability of his candidacy, Hackett "counters that his likely primary opponent, U.S. Rep. Sherrod Brown (D., Lorain), is too liberal to beat Mr. DeWine"—an opportunistic regurgitation of destructive right-wing talking points designed to dishonestly marginalize the progressive move-

ment and its electoral effectiveness.

When the opportunity to elevate a populist hero to as powerful an institution as the Senate arises, it is up to the progressive grassroots base to turn the potential opportunity into concrete reality. This is not about helping Brown because he has "waited his turn" or "paid his dues" as a congressman or Ohio Secretary of State. It is about supporting someone who has courageously used his own political capital for progressive ends, even when it is politically risky—a very rare quality among politicians. It is about promoting someone who has repeatedly stuck his neck out for our cause because it is *his* cause.

Democratic politicians are watching this race. If the progressive base does not reward Brown for his impeccable record and outspoken leadership, we send a message to every other progressive federal, state and local elected official: We do not value elected officials who take risks and fight for the progressive agenda.

Will we as progressives squander this opportunity or will we help ourselves by helping one of our own? Here's hoping for the latter. It's time we start putting our proven champions in positions of power. ■

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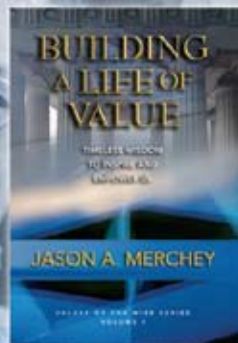
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Throw the Books at Them

A slew of new essays and studies show that fighting against inequality is the battle of our time

BY DAVID MOBERG

IN THE EARLY '80s, when researchers in Britain began studying office workers in Whitehall, the foreign service office, they found some surprising results: The death rates for the lowest-level staff were three times higher from all causes—and four times higher from heart disease—than those of the senior administrators. Differences in smoking, exercise, diet and other behavior that affects health explained less than a third of the disparity. The workers were all “middle class” and could take advantage of the same health care. But as their rank rose, their risk of dying decreased. So what was the most likely cause of their radically different prospects for life and health? Inequality.

We're accustomed to the notion that poverty and material deprivation can hurt people. But poverty is just one dimension of the larger problem of inequality. And the idea that inequality itself is harmful—even to people living in affluent societies—is rarely discussed.

A rising tide sinks many

Yet it's especially relevant for the United States, where economic inequality has been steadily increasing for more than three decades, rolling back virtually all of the progress towards a more equitable distribution of income made over the previous three decades. As economists Heather Boushey and Christian Weller note in

their contribution to *Inequality Matters: The Growing Economic Divide in America and Its Poisonous Consequences*, a fascinating collection of essays commissioned by New York think tank Demos, “the average real income of the bottom 90 percent of American taxpayers declined by 7 percent between 1973 and 2000, while the income of the top 1 percent went up 148 percent.”

Economic growth helps, but it alone is not the answer. Many Americans say they would find inequality tolerable if there were equality of opportunity and social mobility, but there is surprisingly little class mobility in the United States. As the title of one paper in *Unequal Chances: Family Background and Economic Success*

indicates: “The Apple Falls Even Closer to the Tree than We Thought.” More than 40 percent of children born into the poorest fifth of families remain in the poorest fifth as adults; less than 10 percent make it to the top fifth. But 30 percent of children born in the top 10 percent remain there. There are many reasons for this—including race, wealth and personality—but the editors of *Unequal Chances* conclude that “genetic transmission of IQ appears to be surprisingly unimportant” and education and superior cognitive performance explain at most half of the persistence of rank between generations.

According to Sage Foundation president Eric Wanner, the new inequality is likely to reproduce itself as families and schools increasingly diverge in how they prepare each new generation. But the risk of self-perpetuating and hardening inequality also comes from the increasing influence of the wealthy and corporations over politics, the decline of broadly based popular organizations that link the working and middle classes, and the demise of the public sphere with the privatization of “the commons.”

On the hedonic treadmill

But even if there were perfect mobility and educational opportunity, there would still be growing inequality—and that is harmful in itself. Several of these new books—*Greed and Good: Understanding and Overcoming the Inequality That Limits Our Lives*, *Inequality Matters*, *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality & Insecurity* (an excellent popular introduction to the issue of equality) and *The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier*—show how harmful inequality is to society as a whole and to individuals. In *Greed and Good*, a

highly engaging, encyclopedic survey of arguments for and against equality, Sam Pizzigati, a veteran labor journalist, makes a compelling case that increasing inequality contributes to rising unhappiness, corruption of professions like law and medicine, environmental destruction, less innovative businesses, slower economic growth, a fraying social fabric and much more.

Take happiness, for starters. Surveys suggest that once people rise above a struggle to stay alive, rich nations are not necessarily happier than poorer ones, but within countries, affluent people are happier. That’s partly because the rich—and the media—set the standard for what’s necessary for life, a culturally relative category that expands with growing needs. This creates a “hedonic treadmill” or, in the words of economist Robert H. Frank, a “spending cascade” that puts pressure on consumers to buy and can even drive up prices.

As people try to “keep up with the Joneses” on less income, they are also tempted to shortchange the public sector, which is most important for those with less money. This becomes especially harmful as the rich increasingly retreat to private schools, gated communities and a life totally disconnected from average people.

Hazardous to your health

For many decades, researchers have looked at the relationship between inequality or poverty and health, and expected to find that material hardships, bad behaviors or poor medical care account for the worse health of those with less money. But Richard Wilkinson, a professor at the University of Nottingham medical school, shows in his latest book, *The Impact of Inequality*, that social inequality itself causes worse health.

Human beings are fundamentally social animals, and during most of their evolutionary history lived in small groups that valued—and zealously protected—egalitarianism. Humans have the capacity for both cooperative, egalitarian solutions and hierarchical, competitive strategies, and most complex societies rely on both. When there’s an imbalance, Wilkinson argues, it’s not just the society that gets sick; the individuals within it become literally ill.

The evidence that greater inequality in rich countries leads to higher death rates and shorter lives—by as much as 15 years for those with low incomes and status—comes from a large number of comparative studies. Wilkinson argues that inequality creates chronic stress. That’s partly because as societies grow less equal, there’s less trust, greater conflict, more crime, less “social capital” and more racism. Also, in highly unequal societies, more individuals suffer from stresses associated with low status, weak social ties (such as limited links with others as kin or friends), and emotional difficulties early in life. While stresses normally lead to hormonal responses that help individuals survive, the chronic stress of unequal societies is much different in its cumulative effect. These social stresses leads to bodily changes that reduce immunity, raise the risk of heart disease and other illnesses, and lead to dangerous behaviors, such as heavy drinking, that increase the chance of disease and death.

While the impact on health may be surprising, inequality more obviously exerts a pernicious influence on democracy. Early observers of America, including Alexander de Tocqueville, linked the democratic republicanism to “the equality of conditions” of Americans. Now, democracy is threatened by inequality of conditions—both through the undue influence of the monied and through the withdrawal (and exclusion) of low-income voters who see politics as irrelevant to their lives.

Sociologist Christopher Jencks and journalist Robert Kuttner argue in *Inequality Matters* that the United States has uniquely high and growing levels of inequality not for the usual reasons offered—such as increased use of computers or a skills gap—but because of the erosion of political forces that promote equality, such as labor unions, government income supports or working class

Continued on page 37

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North Korean troops perform during the Arirang festival at the 150,000-capacity May Day Stadium in Pyongyang on October 6, 2005.

KIM JAE-HWAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cult of Ideology

North Korea struggles to save face by resisting crucial foreign aid

BY JEHANGIR S. POCHA

PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA—THE illusion of success on which this secretive nation's leaders thrive was on full display in early October as the Korean Workers Party celebrated the 60th anniversary of its ascent to power.

Parks and skyscrapers in the country's showcase city were newly spruced up to valiantly demonstrate how the might and success of the unique brand of Communism practiced by the "hermit kingdom" is still intact.

A song-and-dance extravaganza called "Arirang" was the centerpiece of the festivities. A cast of 100,000 acrobats, dancers, singers, soldiers, musicians and children who made giant designs using colored cards

enthralled the audience as they told a love story with predictable ingredients—boy meets girl and, separated by political turmoil, they fight for their country, defeat the United States and go on to build a warm cozy life in the dazzling new Korea created by Kim Il Sung.

As a group of sopranos sang a paean to Korean identity out on the field, Ryong Chol Li, one of the three government escorts accompanying me and three other American journalists on a restricted government-orchestrated tour, seemed genuinely moved. "It shows how our people are united around the Workers Party of Korea with one mind, single-hearted," he said.

But the decay and despair gripping this

isolated country of 23 million could not be entirely stage-managed away. After the show, as our minds hustled us away from curious locals, most lights were out in Pyongyang.

After the glitz of Beijing, our departure city, Pyongyang looks drab and derelict. Rows of concrete buildings lining the streets seem empty, and while smartly uniformed "traffic girls" direct the traffic with crisp, military-like motions, there are almost no cars on the streets. Most people walk, and some push friends or older family members around in makeshift carts. Giant, smoking chimneys add to the sense of industrial decay that drapes the landscape. The only things gleaming here are the AK-47 rifles slung over the shoulders of soldiers

in khaki, who are everywhere.

Behind the curtain

The next morning, we drove the bumpy road to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates North Korea from South Korea and is often called one of the most dangerous places on earth. Peasants in ragged clothes combed recently reaped rice fields for leftover grains. The legacy of the famine and series of natural disasters that killed about 3 million people and rocked this isolated country in the mid-to-late 1990s, when it was already debilitated by the fall of the Soviet Union, is still alive here.

But Pyongyang appears to be making the dangerous mistake of believing its own illusions. The North Korean government recently informed the 25-odd international NGOs it invited into the country in 1995 to help cope with the famine that they will have to close shop by the end of this year.

Gerald Bourke, a public affairs officer with the World Food Program's (WFP) North Korean operations, says that would be a disaster.

"We very much feel the need to stay," Bourke says. "We feed about 6.5 million here; if WFP were not there to provide supplementary foods to children and pregnant and nursing women, it could be very serious."

Dr. Eigil Sorenson, head of the World Health Organization's office in North Korea, says though his organization will not be "directly affected," the expulsion of other NGOs could hurt supplies of essential medicines, which "would have a possibly subversive effect on the population."

A foreign resident in Pyongyang who requested anonymity said one of the main reasons behind the government's decision is that it does not like "hundreds of foreigners running around the country asking questions and monitoring government activities. It fears this will 'contaminate' the country and people."

Kim Il Sung-ism

Since North Korea's creation in 1945, its "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung, and his son, Kim Jong Il (known as Dear Leader) have advanced a cult-like ideology of self-reliance called *Juche*, or "Kim Il Sung-ism." This philosophy is so fixated on the idea of self-sufficiency that it even has its own calendar, which uses 1912, the year Kim Il Sung was born, as its base year.

The importance authorities attach to maintaining the illusion of *Juche* power

was underlined by the manner in which our embarrassed minders didn't allow us to talk to the people scavenging in the fields or to photograph the scene. Their explanation: Pictures would only make "the world think all North Koreans are hungry and that there is famine in the country," which, of course, they insisted, there isn't.

"In fact, we're having a bumper crop this year," said Mr. Jiang, a minder from the foreign ministry.

As we drove around, Jiang pointed to groups of city school children and office workers who had been drafted by the government to work alongside local farmers in the fields for up to two weeks during the harvesting season.

"This is how we work—as a single society, a single unit with everyone dedicated to the national cause," said Jiang.

But later, as Jiang and the other minders relaxed, they confessed that North Korea is indeed facing hard times—even if they were quick to translate this into a defense for Pyongyang's desire to produce nuclear energy.

"We have no power, so nothing can run. That's why we need the light water reactors," said Jiang, referring to North Korea's demand that it receive civilian nuclear technology in exchange for its recent decision to surrender its military nuclear program. "Without power it's hard to sow crops, water them, cut them, refine them or take them to market."

Though Moscow, Seoul and Beijing are sympathetic to this argument, Tokyo and Washington, have demurred. Their concern is whether the world's last Stalinist state will ever cease threatening South Korea and passing on its nuclear (and missile) technology to rogue states such as Pakistan, Libya and Iran in exchange for much-needed hard currency.

Playing catch-up

North Korea desperately needs huge amounts of capital to restructure its Soviet-style, heavy industry-focused economy and sustain the ambitious social programs it put in place during the '60s and '70s. Then, North Korea's economy was bigger than South Korea's, and even until the early '80s the country was more developed than China. But today, average Chinese incomes are about four times those in North Korea, and on the Chinese side of the Yalu River that separates the two countries, tourists gather to gaze into North Korea as if it is some kind of zoo.

Yet, instead of embracing reforms as

China did, Kim Jong Il is holding fast onto the *Juche* approach, something he justifies by fanning fears of an imminent invasion by the United States.

This siege mentality, developed after years of having to fend off the Japanese, the United States, South Korea and even big brother China's unwarranted attentions, has turned North Korea into an economic basket case.

In 2002 Pyongyang half-heartedly experimented with economic reforms by allowing farmers to sell their own produce and setting up special economic zones in places such as Kaesong along the South Korean border, says Corrada Letta, a senior advisor to the president of Kobe University in Japan who just authored a report on North Korea for the European Union. But it all had little effect.

"The greatest problem in Pyongyang is human," Letta says. "Their political isolation has also led to intellectual isolation and today in no ministry is there enough knowledge on how to go back, on what to do."

Part of the problem is North Korea's "army first" policy, which directs the bulk of the nation's intellectual, economic and social capital to its armed forces.

At the DMZ, North Korean soldiers overlooking the United States' glass and steel complex on the South Korean side looked sharp in their khaki uniforms and mushroom-peak caps. But the village homes just yards away looked ragged, with many of the children there exhibiting the stunted growth and gauntness of chronic malnutrition and disease.

Still, there is no doubt many North Koreans still fervently believe in their leader and system.

"I come here regularly to study the works of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung," says Kim Myong Chol, 47, a construction worker spending his morning hunched over Kim's writings in Pyongyang's national library, the Grand People's Study House.

Portraits of the Great Leader and his son hung overhead and computers hummed nearby, even though they could only access North Korea's intranet and not the Internet.

It had been in a fit of generosity that our minders had allowed us to speak with the researcher during a tour of library. But they soon felt the blowback. Later that afternoon we learned that he had been so enraged with the minders for allowing foreigners to speak with him, that he had lodged a complaint with the authorities—the repercussions of which were serious for our minders.

Opening up, it seems, is a dangerous business in North Korea. ■

The Trouble with French Identity

The riots in France reveal the cracks in its national project

BY G. PASCAL ZACHARY

PARIS—WHAT SENSE CAN be made out of the riots by immigrant youth in France and the ham-handed, painfully ineffective responses by France's political establishment?

Some might say the scenes of street violence throughout France are a rehearsal for a full-blown civil rights movement that would emulate what happened in the United States 40 years ago. Others think the French are witnessing what Samuel Huntington calls the "clash of civilizations," writ small within their own borders—an inevitable and unsolvable clash between Muslims and Christians that will lead inexorably to new forms of exclusion and separation between immigrants and French natives.

Neither of these possibilities will be realized.

France, along with Britain, the United States and Canada, is one of the most popular destinations for Africans fleeing disorder or looking for better personal and professional opportunities. France remains an important metropole in the African universe. Tellingly, French universities are open and free for the top students of Francophone Africa, and living and working in France, even for the African cosmopolitan bent on returning to his home country, is an important rite of passage.

For a long time, what we Americans quaintly call "race relations" were improving in France. As recently as 1998, French society was awakening to the possibilities of a diverse and multicultural society, and seemed to be embracing the advantages such a society offers. That year, on the soccer fields of France, the country's national team won the World Cup with an ethnic rainbow of players. While France's famous failure to acknowledge "difference" in favor of emphasizing universal human ties had not vanished, the country was palpably proud of what could be accomplished when the talents of all its people were trained on the same goal.



Firemen try to put out a burning bus at the entrance of Le Mirail, a neighborhood of Toulouse, in southern France.

LIONEL BONAVENTURE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In retrospect, the World Cup seems like a high-water mark for France's "rainbow coalition." High unemployment and scant job creation narrowed opportunities for the French in general and immigrants in particular.

In 2002, the crypto-fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen stunned the French elite by coming in second in the presidential election, winning a place in a run-off against Jacques Chirac. Le Pen relished the chance to bring his nativist, anti-immigrant message to a wider audience, and French multiculturalists braced themselves for further embarrassment. Instead, Chirac demolished Le Pen, who failed to raise his vote count. For the moment, at least, France's approach to minorities survived serious scrutiny.

A fiery reckoning

The rage of France's immigrant youth this fall comes after a trying summer when the politics of immigration reform collided with the reality of immigrant life. In July, the now infamous French minis-

ter of the interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, who oversees immigration rules, proposed a radical revamping of the country's immigration system. The son of a Hungarian immigrant to France, Sarkozy wanted to attract more skilled professionals to the country and reduce the flow of migrants from former colonies, thereby creating a more diverse group of immigrants that would reflect the world's population rather than a specific region.

The trouble is that African and Arab immigrants in France view any such change as a ratification of their inferior status, even though an increase in immigrants from Asia, Russia and other non-traditional places could ultimately strengthen the political hand of all immigrants in France. Sarkozy is perhaps the first French politician ever to tackle the immigration question at all creatively and he is one of the few French leaders to support affirmative action programs for ethnic minorities.

But it now seems likely that crisis, rather than creativity, will define France's immigrant question. (And certainly Sarkozy

helped deepen the crisis by calling the rioters “scum.”) The rioting in France has been characterized as a mishandling of immigrants, as an unacknowledged race issue gone awry. This is true as far as it goes.

But commentators fail to recognize that the French national project—maintaining a strong central government that on principle denies special consideration to any of France’s ethnic populations—is tightly bound to the French global project—promoting and sustaining French culture as a viable alternative to both Americanization and deracinated cosmopolitanism. In other words, the same logic that drives the French government to provide no special treatment to immigrants drives the French unitary state.

Of all the large European nations, France strives hardest for consistency and centralization. Language policy is a superb example. The Paris center relentlessly pushes the French language, warring against the persistence of regional “dialects” such as Breton, Catalan, Alsatian and Occitan, which is spoken in a large region of southern France. Regional variation in laws and procedures, of the sort routinely accepted in the United States, is out of bounds in France. Consider Cor-

sica, the Mediterranean island that France has ruled since 1768. French refusal to permit local control over schools and police—a staple of American life—spawned a violent separatist movement in the ’70s and even today the island maintains tense relations with Paris.

The internal contradictions of the French national project are linked to the contradictions within France’s global project. For French politicians, then, any retreat from centralization toward policies that show favoritism or merely cater to the special needs of immigrants has the potential to ignite calls for similar treatment for the natives of the French regions. Not only Corsicans would want special treatment, but the French Basques as well. And so might the regions of the French north like Brittany. Such regional claims have been held in check for centuries, and it was partly because the Paris center was busy imposing a state language and a unitary state on its own internal regions that colonies—in Africa and the Caribbean notably—were incorporated, at least officially, as integral parts of the French nation.

However absurd the French approach seems now, it made perfect sense to Pari-

sians of the ’50s who were recovering from the Nazi occupation, the disastrous war in Vietnam and the quagmire in Algeria. Fifty years ago, the very viability of the French state was in question. Restoring pride in French culture meant, for many people, even some on the left, restoring a strong unitary French state.

Reactionary elements in French society, however, are similarly constrained by the same forces that limit the actions of French cosmopolitans. There is little chance for French chauvinists to curtail immigration, only alter its character.

The success of France’s global cultural project—to promote the French language and culture as a prominent alternative to a homogenized, Anglo-American-style global culture—depends on people in developing countries, Eastern Europe and even Asia being able to “access” the French motherland. French nationalists recognize the importance of America’s “soft power”—the power that comes from people around the world desiring to live in America, to buy American goods, to act American. At a time of international outrage against official Washington policies and actions, the French know they have an unparalleled opportunity to push the French option. They cannot simply turn off the immigration tap. Indeed, the likelier choice, as Sarkozy has suggested, is that immigration will remain at current levels, but that immigration policy could well be de-coupled from France’s colonial legacy.

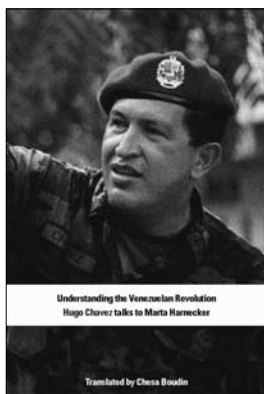
But with Paris and outlying cities smoldering, there is no chance of any constructive re-thinking of immigration. Chirac has ruled out any engagement until the violent protests stop. But as the immigrant youth have finally found the spotlight because they engaged in violence, they may realize rightly that resorting to peaceful defiance may cost them their leverage. The big question, then, is whether France is facing a day of reckoning over its failed immigration policies or whether, when order is finally restored and the angry youth retreat from the nation’s consciousness, the marginalization of immigrants remains unchanged. That would be, to put it in garbled French, déjà vu all over again. ■

G. PASCAL ZACHARY is the author of *The Diversity Advantage: Multicultural Identity and the New World Economy*.

Understanding the Venezuelan Revolution

Hugo Chávez Talks to Marta Harnecker

Translated by Chesa Boudin



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Hugo Chávez talks to Marta Harnecker about his aspirations for Venezuela, its domestic and international policies, problems of political organization, relations with social movements in other countries, and more. The exchange between Harnecker and Chávez—sometimes reflective, sometimes anecdotal—brings to light the process of thought and action behind the public pronouncements and policies of state.

35 Books: George Packer and the limits of empathy.

36 Media: The case of the missing female bylines.

40 Kurt Vonnegut gives it a guess.



From top left to right, women who "Snapped": Manuela Garcia, Jeen Han, Mary Thompson, Dora Cisneros, Linda Lou Charbonneau, Donna Yaklich

COURTESY OF OXYGEN MEDIA, INC.

BY SILJA J.A. TALVI

Bad Girls

The typical American female TV criminal is nasty, cutthroat, cunning, duplicitous and sexy to boot. Oxygen, a women-oriented cable channel, hypes its popular "Snapped" series this way: "From millionaire brides with everything to lose,

to small-town sweethearts who should simply know better, these shocking but true stories turn common assumptions about crime and criminals upside down."

The show promises to reveal that there is "something far more sinister to the fairer sex than 'sugar and spice and everything nice.'" As proof, "Snapped" offers up Carolyn Warmus, the daughter of a self-made millionaire. "To put it simply," Carolyn, a "young temptress" with "blond hair, a voluptuous figure, and sassy personality, got what Carolyn wanted, including men."

As temptresses do, Carolyn began an affair with a

married man. Then "the sexy nymphet ... turned her charms on [a] private dick," who eventually provided her with a silencer-enabled gun.

One dead wife-of-her-lover later, Carolyn Warmus finds herself on trial, "dressed to kill ... arriving every day in very short, very tight miniskirts and designer clothes. With her striking good looks, expensive outfits, and murderous persona, Warmus was the embodiment of the 'femme fatal': a sexy, dangerous blond bombshell that seemed to step right out of the hardboiled detective films and pulp novels of the '40s."

Words that could have been lifted out those colorful paperbacks—this is what passes as entertainment for women?

Other outlets have also joined the fun. E! Entertainment Television's series, asks viewers to contemplate: "How does a match made in heaven turn into hell on earth?"

In response, E! offers "True Hollywood Stories: Women Who Kill," in which audiences are introduced to Margaret Rudin, "a gold digger with a dark side," and Kristin Rossum, who is presumed to have killed her mate "because she had a handsome lover on the side."

Deeper motives

Are there cunning, narcissistic women who would kill for thrill or profit? Sure. Why not? Someone's gender doesn't ascribe ethical character traits, no matter how much essentialist thinkers would like to think otherwise. But the fact is that cold-hearted women who are simply out for themselves are a tiny minority of women doing time for murder—or any other crime.

When women kill their mates, such acts are usually in self-defense—or as a result of longstanding physical and emotional abuse. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), at least half of all women in prison, including those jailed for nonviolent offences, were abused by spouses before their incarceration.

Unfortunately, even strong evidence of being battered doesn't do much to help tip the scales of justice in women's favor. According to Harvard University domestic violence researcher Angela Browne, women who kill men in self-defense—and where there is evidence of severe assault prior to the killing—are acquitted only 25 percent of the time.

On top of this, women who are charged with the murder

of their partners have the least extensive criminal records of any group of convicted offenders. Yet the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that the average prison sentence of men who kill their female partners ranges from two to six years, while women who kill their partners are sentenced to an average of 15 years. In states ranging from Florida to South Carolina, many are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole.

In 1993 an Ohio-based research team studying the motivations for murder in intimate relationships found that 82 percent of men in custody who killed female partners or wives did so because they were motivated by "possessiveness," whereas 83 percent of women in custody described their motivation for murder as "self-defense."

On programs about women in prison, even the act of self-protection is subject to sensationalizing. Here's how the producers of "Snapped" pretend to confide in their viewers: "Let's be honest, we've all had at least one moment in which we felt as though we could snap. Even if you're in the 'perfect relationship,' chances are, you've probably said (or even just fleetingly thought), 'I'm going to kill my husband!' So what separates those of us who do, from those who don't?"

In one case, "Snapped" did bring viewers a case that reflected the most common reason women kill their partners.

As we learn, Kimberley Kondejewski of Brandon, Manitoba, put up with serious abuse for no less than 17 years from a controlling husband with whom she had two children. When her husband, a military instructor, went so far as to demand that she commit suicide so he could collect the insurance money (with the threat of doing the deed himself and taking out the children in the process), "the

meek housewife put a quick and final end to his cruelty."

Kimberly shot her husband, and then turned the gun on herself. But she didn't die. Charged with murder shortly thereafter, Kimberly told her story to a jury. That jury, in turn, found that she was not guilty of the charge and sent her home to put her life back together with her children.

Ah, justice.

Ah, Canada.

American justice

It's rare to see this kind of justice in the United States, where women like Flozelle Woodmore still sit in prison.

Woodmore was 13 years old when she began a relationship with a boyfriend who would end up beating, sexually assaulting and stalking her. Impregnated for the first time at 15, Woodmore was an overwhelmed and severely abused minor without the ability to seek a restraining order—or the know-how to extricate herself from the situation. When she was 18, Woodmore

killed her boyfriend, her first and only criminal offense. Information about the abuse was never admitted into court testimony. Woodmore thought she was doing the right thing when she pled guilty, and received a 15-to-life indeterminate sentence. While in prison, Woodmore has become a 'model prisoner,' staying clear of infractions, becoming president of an Alcoholics Anonymous group, and earning her G.E.D. Although Woodmore is supported in her plea for parole by the victim's family, the sentencing judge, and every member of the California Legislative Women's Caucus, her recommended parole has been denied by a California governor no less than four times.

This past August, California's Governor Schwarzenegger denied Woodmore parole, reversing the Board of Parole Hearings' earlier decision to set her free.

Shows like "Snapped" don't only misrepresent the lives of women like Woodmore, they distort the realities of rising female incarceration. Most

ART SPACE



In January, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago will open the exhibit **Made in China**, a photo and video installation exploring "China's rapidly changing society and its rising influences as an economic force in the global arena." The exhibit includes work by Edward Burtynsky, Polly Branden and Danwen Xing.



Flozelle Woodmore

COURTESY OF FREE BATTERED WOMEN

women aren't behind bars because they committed murder. In the United States, the dramatic increase in the female prison population has much to do with decades of ever-more draconian drug laws. (According to the latest findings from the BJS, women were more likely to be in a state prison for a drug offense in 2004, at 32 percent of inmates, than men were, at the rate of 21 percent.)

Nationally, some 200,000 women are now sitting in jails or prisons—more than eight times as many incarcerated women as in 1980. At least 75 percent of these women are mothers. Out of the 7 million Americans under some form of correctional supervision, 1 million are women.

Two eye-opening new books, Nell Bernstein's *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated* and Renny Golden's *War on the Family: Mothers in Prison and the Families They Leave Behind*, highlight another byproduct of women's mass incarceration that has, thus far, been overlooked. As Bernstein and Golden discuss, one in 10 American children have a parent ensnared in the criminal justice system, while one in 33 will go to sleep tonight without being able to see a parent because she or he is behind bars.

Not only do the vast majority of these women in jail or prison leave at least one child behind when they get locked up, they also are more likely than male prisoners to arrive there with serious histories of emotional, sexual and physical abuse at the hands of family members, partners or strangers. Many are already mentally ill, sick, or both, with chronic diseases, including cancer, hepatitis C and HIV, diseases that end up

costing taxpayers millions of dollars, and which often result in the end of a prisoner's life while still incarcerated.

But stereotyping women in prison as "victims" is no more accurate than buying into the "Snapped" line of heartless, conniving, and (literally) backstabbing vixens who have more than earned their lengthy stays behind bars.

In truth, many imprisoned women are survivors of the most awesome kind, who should be seen for the individuals they are. These women have carved out their own lives, identities and realities for themselves despite tremendous odds. Are these women complicated, and do they suffer just like you and I? Of course. Are they fierce enough to hurt anyone who bares his or her teeth in their general direction? On occasion. But does any of that make for good television?

Actually, it can.

In November, the cable channel BBC America began to broadcast one of Western Europe's most popular dramas, "Bad Girls," about the day-to-day life of inmates in a women's prison.

Now in its seventh season, "Bad Girls" is the brainchild of three women who have been

frank about the fact that the show gives them an opportunity to highlight many of the injustices of female incarceration.

"Eighty percent of women in prison are there for nonviolent crimes," co-producer Eileen Gallagher recently told the *New York Times*. "[It is] basically our political philosophy that it's a complete waste of money to lock them up."

"Bad Girls" has its over-the-top, soap-opera aspects, to be sure. But the rotating cast of characters come into prison as three-dimensional human beings. These fictionalized characters are ethnically diverse, speaking a variety of different regional dialects. Some are lesbians (yes, real same-sex, non-noir love in prison exists), and many are women in their 40s or 50s. One woman battles breast cancer with the support of her fellow prisoners, and most struggle to keep up some kind of relationship with their family and children on the outside.

The more vulnerable women in prison have to fend off attacks from aggressive alpha-female prisoners and/or male correctional officers, sometimes unsuccessfully. These women often use drugs—in and out of prison—and many speak openly of having prostituted themselves in very unglamorous ways. As their stories unfold, so do the complex circumstances that lead real-life women to the prison cell they occupy today.

I'll take "Bad Girls" over "Snapped" any day. Better still, give us an injection of truth-telling about women in prison, in all of its compelling and riveting reality. Television really could be that powerful, if we weren't so afraid of what it might unleash. ■

The California Coalition for Women Prisoners has launched a campaign against Oxygen's "Snapped" series, at www.freebatteredwomen.org/Stop-Snapped.htm.

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BY BRIAN COOK

The Limits of Empathy

There's a lot to like about *The Assassins' Gate*, George Packer's sober meditation on the invasion and occupation of Iraq. For starters, Packer, a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, differs from his fellow liberal

hawks in that his book is based on on-the-ground reporting, and therefore manifests an empathy for its subjects.

He's at his best when detailing the systematic and, worse, arbitrary sadism meted out to Iraqis during Saddam's reign. His e-mail correspondence with the father of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq does more to convey the choking grief of bereaved families than 100 candlelit vigils. And—during the early stages of the occupation, when it was still safe for Iraqis to talk to Westerners—Packer interviewed an astonishingly wide swath of Iraqi society. The conversations make for a damning indictment of the occupiers' feeble attempts to win “hearts and minds,” as we see hopes thwarted and frustrations allowed to fester.

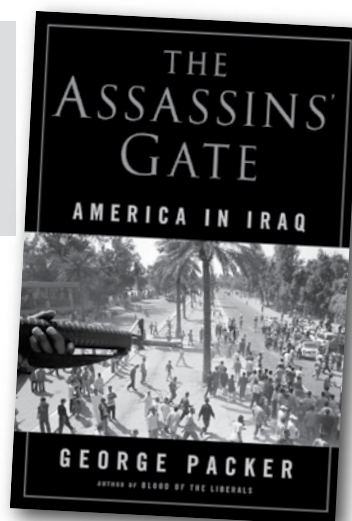
The Assassins' Gate also provides the most comprehensive examination thus far of the White House and Pentagon neocons who planned (and pushed) for the war. Although Richard Perle tells Packer that “there's no intellectual history” of the war, over the last decade, a bevy (or, if you prefer, a cabal) of these American Enterprise Institute “scholars” left behind a trail of policy papers and journal articles advocating for “regime change.” As Packer studiously parses his way through

**The Assassins' Gate:
America in Iraq**
By George Packer
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
467 pages, \$26

these documents, as well as the internecine struggles within the Bush administration, he creates a clear and informative chronology.

That said—and that is quite a bit—*The Assassins' Gate* contains much to dislike, and, oddly, its considerable deficiencies intertwine with what makes the book compelling. For Packer's empathy is not just limited to those victimized by the occupation—it also extends to the administrators and soldiers doing the occupying. Without this empathy, he likely would have never gained access to those he quotes, nor would they have felt comfortable enough to speak as forthrightly as they do. But all too often, Packer treats these responses with a consideration they do not deserve.

Not that Packer is uncritical. He and the people he quotes are often very critical of the administration's incompetence and detachment. But this criticism occurs in a framework that assumes the United States



is in Iraq for the benefit of the Iraqi people. It is an assumption, which, in the parlance of our times, is wholly faith-based.

A representative example is Packer's conversation with Brad Swanson, a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) staffer working on “private-sector development.” Swanson attributes the CPA's failings to “groupthink,” which Packer describes as a “uniform mind-set that takes hold of any hermetic hierarchical institution.” Swanson says people were so concentrated on the tasks at hand that “no one asked whether the CPA had any business writing codes for Iraq that created a 15 percent flat tax, transparent accounting procedures, and new banking

and commercial laws.” “All these things were great laws,” Swanson tells Packer, “but they just had no application in the real world.”

But as Naomi Klein noted in her September 2004 *Harper's* article, “Year Zero,” these “great laws” did indeed have an application in the real world, being “unprecedented in their generosity to multinational corporations.” For Packer, the idea that the CPA was designed to devote its time and generosity to multinational corporations instead of the Iraqi people is inconceivable.

Another unquestioned wisdom today—on both sides of the aisle—is that we must “support the troops.” Now I wouldn't suggest the poor teenagers toiling in 140-plus temperatures be castigated as lackeys of imperialism. But I also wouldn't classify, as Packer does, our soldiers' conclusions that “Iraqi men were unreliable, didn't tell the truth, couldn't think rationally, never showed initiative,” as “hard-learned home truths.” And I wouldn't quote without comment, as Packer does, one soldier's belief that “the depressing part” about Abu Ghraib was “its effect on everyone else, not what actually happened.” Such sentiments explain a lot about why the occupation is not proceeding as planned.

In fairness, Packer doesn't whitewash the brutality of some U.S. troops, and he also records U.S. soldiers behaving incredibly cool-headedly under ridiculously trying circumstances. One of the most inspiring and exemplary is Army Capt. John Prior. But at one point, he tells Packer, “In my heart I believe everybody's American.”

If even the best among us is so unreflectively hubristic, Packer's conclusion that “the Iraq war was always winnable; it still is,” suggests that he too is believing with his heart, instead of thinking with his head. ■



By Jessica Clark

She-said/She-said

Sayonara, Judy Miller. Maureen Dowd is the latest “it girl.” Arianna Huffington made the rounds, touting the joys of bloggery, but Dowd pushed her aside with a potent mix of hair flipping and flip assertions.

Perhaps a recent study demonstrating that the female voice is more complex than the male voice explains why only one token smart woman can dominate the headlines at a given time—any more would boggle the mind! This might also account for the dearth of female commentators in the agenda-setting national media, an issue that has been bubbling since the spring.

The latest burble is a comparison of the ratio of male to female bylines in five national “general interest” magazines by Ruth Davis Konigsberg, a deputy editor of features at *Glamour*. As of mid-November, the tally among *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker* and *Vanity Fair* was running 377 to 124.

“They’re all great magazines,” says Konigsberg, who is maintaining the count at www.womentk.com (a site unaffiliated with *Glamour*). “I just think that they can be even better with more women’s voices and perspectives.”

At *In These Times*? At last count: 27 percent.

Konigsberg’s project barely breaks the surface, however, compared to this spring’s “Opiniongate,” which pitted

Los Angeles Times contributing editor, Susan Estrich against the editorial page editor Michael Kinsley. Estrich raised a stink after documenting that on average only 20 percent of the editorials were written by women.

The high-profile exchange sparked an acrimonious national debate about why female writers are underrepresented in “serious” media, including front-page stories, the news-driving Sunday talk shows and the blogosphere. Commentators (many of them female) advanced a range of theories to explain the gap, from the biological (women aren’t “hardwired” for debate) to the structural (the dudes are keeping us down).

A lack of up-and-coming female writers isn’t the issue. “I am doing my best to sensitize the 28 percent of my students who are male and are most to likely get 90 percent of the good jobs—some of whom probably didn’t do as well as the female students, who make up 72 percent of the student body,” says Michele Weldon, an assistant professor at Northwestern’s Medill School of Journalism.

Many rightly point out that female journalists have traditionally been shunted to soft news. Kara Jesella, who is writing a book on the upstart

’90s teen magazine, *Sassy*, says that fashion magazines provide young women with attractive career opportunities. “We can see our name in print, manage whole departments, travel. We are making more than \$18,000 a year (the assistant salary at most magazines.)

“The problem arises when you want to do other kinds of writing and find that you’ve been typecast,” Jesella continues. Does the same go for men? “My former next-door neighbor spent a few years covering sports for *The New York Times*,” Jesella notes. “Since the war, he has been in Iraq and I see his byline regularly on the front page.”

So it goes—even at the most progressive of magazines. “The answer is more complex than mounting a letter-writing campaign,” says Sarah Blustain, the deputy editor at *The American Prospect* and former managing editor at *The New Republic*. “It’s not that editors aren’t aware of the problem. The newsroom culture is not scientific. It’s human, and these dynamics are hard to overcome.”

Still, they can be hard to bear. “At *The New Republic*, every Monday morning we would sit around and talk about that weekend’s basketball games,”

says Blustain. “We would make little uncomfortable jokes about why I didn’t know what was going on. There was something alienating about that.”

And who defines “news”? “My experience is that an awful lot of straight male editors do not see anything related to the reproductive organs as a serious public policy issue,” says writer E.J. Graff, who most recently collaborated on Evelyn Murphy’s new book, *Getting Even: Why Women Still Don’t Get Paid Like Men & What to Do About It*. “Unfortunately, those magazines help set the public policy agenda for the country.”

Women are spearheading a crop of new projects to address these issues. Since 2002, POWER Sources, which matches journalists from independent and national media up with diverse female experts, has been a core project of the media advocacy organization Women In Media & News (WIMN). “They’re experts in everything from arms to zoology,” WIMN’s director Jennifer Pozner says. This philosophy inspired the organization’s newest project, a blog on women and media to be launched by the end of the year. So far, 50 women, including Laura Flanders and Medea Benjamin, have committed to blog on 50 topics.

Two other projects backed by prominent feminists have also emerged in recent months: SheSource touts women with clout as sources for the mainstream media, and the Women’s Media Center, backed by Jane Fonda and Gloria Steinem, highlights the work of female commentators.

For some, these efforts can’t come soon enough. “I have lately been fantasizing about grant funding to start a ‘farm-team’ project that recruits young women and cultivates women political writers,” says Alexandra Walker, executive editor of the progressive Web site TomPaine.

Make way, Maureen. ■

Throw the Books

Continued from page 27

parties. Why has there been such a growth of low-wage jobs? “It’s politics, stupid,” says Jencks.

An ideology of greed

How did this political sea-change come about? David Harvey, author of *The Condition of Post-Modernity*, offers an elegant explanation in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Harvey argues that ruling elites in the United States promoted neoliberalism—or free market fundamentalism—for both this country and the world as “a project to achieve the restoration of class power,” which was threatened economically and politically in the late ’60s and early ’70s. As a central part of that strategy, corporations and the rich, supported by allies in think tanks and conservative organizations, used globalization not only to produce new markets and cheap labor, but as a political battering ram to attack policies that restricted capital or protected workers.

Harvey argues that neoliberalism serves to legitimize what the powerful want to do, which includes dismantling all the institutions and political forces that had increased economic equality. It does so by cloaking policies in the garb of “freedom.” But the freedom is mainly for private property, and then, to a lesser degree, for individuals as consumers. Individuals aren’t free to choose solidarity or equality.

The neoliberal strategy, however, contains internal contradictions. For example, although growing inequality favors the wealthy in the short run, it is also associated with slower economic growth. And Harvey argues that neoliberalism faces difficulties resolving how to enforce a dictatorship of the market while advocating individual freedom, how to create citizen loyalty in a state that offers only protection of property and national security, and how to preach competition at a time of growing economic concentration.

Americans seem at best ambivalent about restraining great wealth. But Pizigati shreds the rationales for inequality—as an incentive, as a justifiable reward, as the price paid for charitable benevolence—and argues that a just society must not only “level up” the poor but also “level down” the rich, capping their incomes at ten times the minimum wage. (The

average CEO last year made 431 times the average worker’s earnings). That would create a real incentive for the elite to raise the wages of most workers in order for them to increase their own incomes, and it could have a wide range of benefits—from slowing the hedonic treadmill to improving health and giving free reign to motivations other than greed.

It’s a utopian proposal—but so was the estate tax when it was first proposed two centuries ago (and which, if the Republicans have their way, may soon become utopian again). *Inequality Matters* includes some more modest proposals—such as major political reform, national health insurance, stronger labor laws and new global trade deals—but even these seem pretty utopian in Bush World.

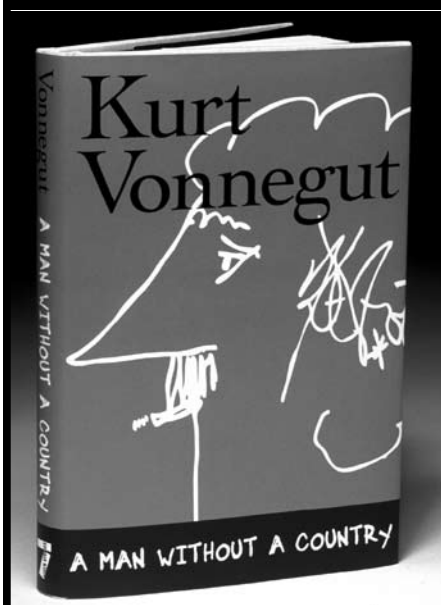
It was only in the late 18th century that people—other than the utopian Levelers—started thinking that poverty might be abolished. In *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate*, historian Gareth Stedman Jones writes about how the global revolutionary-pamphleteer Thomas Paine and the French *philosophe* Marquis de Condorcet were inspired by the Ameri-

can and French revolutions to propose social insurance systems, a radically novel proposition. They were attacked by reactionaries in terms that are all-too-familiar two centuries later.

Progressives need both to fight the diverse immediate battles against neoliberalism and to develop a long-term goal of redistributing income, wealth and power from the contemporary ruling class to the working and middle class majority. To do so requires unity. But too often working and middle class constituencies, while sharing a common interest in creating an alternative to inequality and neoliberalism, are divided by differences in experience and culture. In *Class Matters: Cross-Class Alliance Building for Middle-Class Activists*, United for a Fair Economy organizer Betsy Leondar-Wright explores the impact of those differences, for example, in degrees of security, and offers a how-to guide on bridging the class divide.

Few projects are more important than developing that common commitment to realize one of the central political principles of a just society—equality, the foundation of both liberty and fraternity. ■

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Your Guess

Continued from back page

The masses of humanity, having no solid information to tell them otherwise, have had little choice but to believe this guesser or that one. Russians who didn't think much of the guesses of Ivan the Terrible, for example, were likely to have their hats nailed to their heads.

We must acknowledge, though, that persuasive guessers—even Ivan the Terrible, now a hero in Russia—have given us courage to endure extraordinary ordeals that we had no way of understanding. Crop failures, wars, plagues, eruptions of volcanoes, babies being born dead—the guessers gave us the illusion that bad luck and good luck were understandable and could somehow be dealt with intelligently and effectively.

Without that illusion, we would all have surrendered long ago. But in fact, the guessers knew no more than the common people and sometimes less. The important thing was that they gave us the illusion that we're in control of our destinies.

Persuasive guessing has been at the core of leadership for so long—for all of human experience so far—that it is wholly unsurprising that most of the leaders of this planet, in spite of all the information that is suddenly ours, want the guessing to go on, because now it is their turn to guess and be listened to.

Some of the loudest, most proudly ignorant guessing in the world is going on in Washington today. Our leaders are sick of all the solid information that has been dumped on humanity by research and scholarship and investigative reporting.

They think that the whole country is sick of it, and they want standards, and it isn't the gold standard. They want to put us back on the snake-oil standard.

Loaded pistols are good for people unless they're in prisons or lunatic asylums.
That's correct.

Millions spent on public health are inflationary.

That's correct.

Billions spent on weapons will bring inflation down.

That's correct.

Industrial wastes, and especially those that are radioactive, hardly ever hurt anybody, so everybody should shut up about them.

That's correct.

Industries should be allowed to do

whatever they want to do: Bribe, wreck the environment just a little, fix prices, screw dumb customers, put a stop to competition and raid the Treasury in case they go broke.

That's correct.

That's free enterprise.

And that's correct.

The poor have done something very wrong or they wouldn't be poor, so their children should pay the consequences.

That's correct.

The United States of America cannot be expected to look after its people.

That's correct.

The free market will do that.

That's correct.

The free market is an automatic system of justice.

That's correct.

And so on.

If you actually are an educated, thinking person, you will not be welcome in Washington, D.C. I know a couple of bright seventh graders who would not be welcomed in Washington, D.C.

Do you remember those doctors a few years back who got together and announced that it was a simple, clear medical fact that

we could not survive even a moderate attack by hydrogen bombs? They were not welcome in Washington, D.C.

Even if we fired the first salvo of hydrogen weapons and the enemy never fired back, the poisons released would probably kill the whole planet by and by.

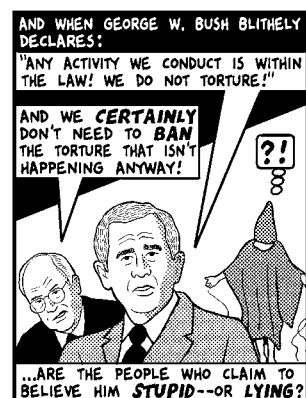
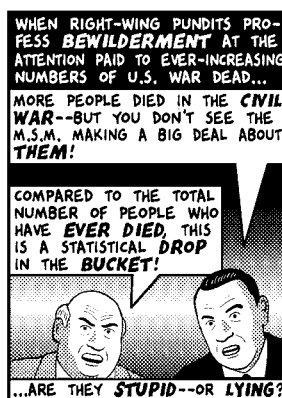
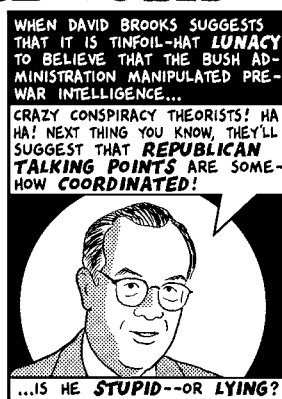
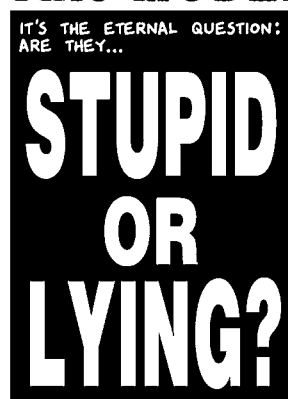
What is the response in Washington? They guess otherwise. What good is an education? The boisterous guessers are still in charge—the haters of information. And the guessers are almost all highly educated people. Think of that. They have had to throw away their educations, even Harvard or Yale educations, to become guessers. If they didn't do that, there is no way their uninhibited guessing could go on and on and on.

Please, don't you do that. But let me warn you, if you make use of the vast fund of knowledge now available to educated persons, you are going to be lonesome as hell. The guessers outnumber you—and now I have to guess—about ten to one. ■

This essay was adapted from Senior Editor Kurt Vonnegut's new bestseller, A Man Without a Country, which can be ordered at www.sevenstories.com or calling 1-800-596-7437.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





your guess is as good as mine

BY KURT VONNEGUT

MOST OF YOU, IF not all of you, like me, feel inadequately educated. That is an ordinary feeling for a member of our species. One of the most brilliant human beings of all times, George Bernard Shaw said on his 75th birthday or so that at last he knew enough to become a mediocre office boy. He died in 1950, by the way, when I was 28. He is the one who said, "Youth is wasted on the young." I turned 83 a couple weeks ago, and I must say I agree.

Shaw, if he were alive today, would envy us the solid information that we have or can get about the nature of the universe,

about time and space and matter, about our own bodies and brains, about the resources and vulnerabilities of our planet, about how all sorts of human beings actually talk and feel and live.

This is the information revolution. We have taken it very badly so far. Information seems to be getting in the way all the time. Human beings have had to guess about almost everything for the past million years or so. Our most enthralling and sometimes terrifying guessers are the leading characters in our history books. I will name two of them: Aristotle and Hitler. One good guesser and one bad one.

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